

## Pastor's Corner December 2021

*<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life,<sup>[a]</sup> and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:1-5)*

In 2013 when my family moved from suburban New Orleans to suburban Chicago, I was ready for a change. I had a full life on the Gulf Coast, with a beautiful family, a busy law practice, and I attended a wonderful church. So, when my family decided to move to northern Illinois, after living in the New Orleans area for years, I decided it was time to embrace change. We spent several months preparing for the move, including traveling to Chicago to look for places to live and a school for my son Jack. We scheduled the movers to haul our belongings cross country for us. And yes, we bought winter gear. Not nearly enough, as it turns out (we would be fully outfitted for winter much later once we got better acquainted with Chicago winter weather). We thought we were prepared.

But the biggest change for me, and the hardest to adapt to, wasn't the cold weather, the new house, or my new job. The biggest change for me was the darkness. Until we moved that far north, I had no idea that the sun would set at 4:20 p.m. and wouldn't rise again until 7:00 the next morning. The sun sets about an hour later here in north Texas, which doesn't sound all that significant until you're in a place where it's fully dark at 4:30 p.m. I loved Chicago (and still do), but the winter months seemed so much longer because we lived most of them in darkness. After a few months of living in a place that has a serious winter, complete with darkness and a lot of snow, I finally understood the lyrics to the first verse of the hymn, "In the Bleak Midwinter" – "In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan, earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone; snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow, in the bleak midwinter, long ago."

Of all the scripture readings that we typically read during Advent, I most resonate with the beautiful prologue from the Gospel of John. I really love the image of Jesus as the light of the world. There are times in everyone's lives when things feel dark, whether we're surrounded by physical darkness, or whether it feels like we're engulfed in a spiritual or emotional darkness. When we do, we can feel lost and instinctively look for light to guide our way. When I lived in northern Illinois, one of my favorite days of the year was the winter solstice. The longest night of the year provides the least amount of light, but it's also the tipping point for hope. There are all sorts of ways we can mark our days, and one of mine has been remembering that once the winter solstice passed, we would get a little more light with each passing day. The change was gradual but was a constant reminder that the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

This year, as we celebrate Christmas, let us experience anew the inbreaking of God's presence into our world. May we see the light, feel it, and reflect it to the world around us. May we remember the Christmas carol, "Angels from the Realms of Glory," when we sing, "God with us is now residing; yonder shines the infant light." As this year draws to a close, we don't know what the future will bring, but we know we'll see a little more light each day. To God be the glory.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Jennifer