



GOOD TIDINGS FROM ZION

Go and...be honest



This month's Go and... theme is Go and...be honest. We likely would all say we prize honesty. Yet we don't always like it when someone is completely honest with us about something we've not been honest with ourselves about. And at the same time, we've all told "white lies" often to protect someone's feelings.

Perhaps the most important aspect of honesty is our ability to be honest with ourselves. It might also be the hardest. Honesty is the first step in repentance. We cannot turn back to God until we're honest with ourselves about the things that draw us away.

In many ways, Advent is a season of honesty. The readings, no matter which lectionary you use, include messages of warning and judgment followed by messages of healing and hope.

In Advent, we recognize our need for a savior. We recognize all the ways in which we are a mess, the church is a mess, and the world is a mess. We see our world reflected in words from prophets thousands of years ago. But we also read the hope that is there...the hope that comes from anticipation of the coming Messiah into the world and into our hearts. We wait with longing for the day when God's reign is fully established. And we face honestly the ways that we and the church have tried to block that reign.

Take some time either on a walk or in your prayer time to reflect on the past year. If journaling is your thing, reflect in your journal.

What do you need to face honestly? What does the church need to face honestly?

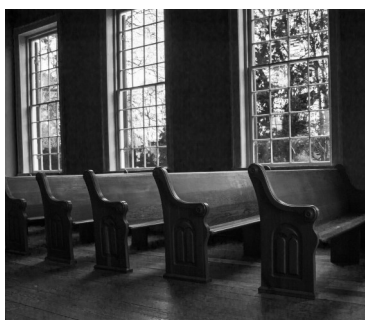
In Christ,

Pastor Kris

A View from the Pew

By Preacher Woman's Husband

As we come off several days of gluttony and giving thanks, I am returning to spending time each morning reading. One of the books I am working my way through is, *From Strength to Strength: Finding Success, Happiness, and Deep Purpose in the Second Half of Life* by Arthur C. Brooks (2022). Brooks draws on science, classical philosophy, theology, and history to share strategies for forming new life practices in the transition to what he refers to as the second arc of life. This book has been very helpful in guiding my thinking about how I want to be when I grow up!



Regardless of where you are in life, he offers a wealth of advice and shares his own journey, making it a very readable book. In two of the most recent chapters I have read, he explores the value of friendships later in life as well as the importance of investing in one's spiritual development.

Brooks points out that for those who have been working hard, building careers, accumulating wealth, and maintaining a family, it can be difficult to have deep and meaningful relationships outside of our spouses and families. Yet, these types of friends are important as a Harvard longitudinal study of adult development found out: Stable, long-term relationships are a big predictor of being happy and well later in life. Or said another way by one of the study directors, "The people who were the most satisfied in their relationships at age fifty were the healthiest at age eighty."

Certainly, the church, or more accurately, the church community – the people sharing the pew with you – is a great place to forge such relationships. It's also a great place to seek spiritual development. But as Brooks points out, it is a highly personal experience and he quotes a poet named Sufi to make the point, "It's your road and yours alone. Others may walk it with you, but no one can walk it for you."

So why is it so difficult to make our spiritual development, or faith life, a priority?

For me, it's been a challenge and more often than not I have felt like I simply don't have the time. Yet, I religiously take my cholesterol medicine and faithfully log it on the app on my phone without anyone urging me to or noticing. So where to start with scheduling time for meditation, prayer, and other habits that contribute to my spiritual well-being?

It has started with walking for me. Taking time to walk affords me the perfect time to be thoughtful and reflective and to simply be. In addition, I had gotten a little thick around the middle and this is helping me return to a more active lifestyle and a thinner waistline. Perhaps most importantly, it has helped me be less thick-headed – but that's probably a question for Preacher Woman to answer!

Meanwhile, I'll keep walking and perhaps our paths will cross along the way.

Advent Prayer Practice

Advent is a good time to commit to daily prayer practices if you aren't already. The traditional is a home Advent wreath. Our kids always got into that when they were little. I still like to have one. Each week, light a candle and say a prayer. Listen to music or play or sing. Here are the traditional Advent candle themes if you need a focus for your prayers.

December 3—Hope

December 10—Peace

December 17—Joy

December 24—Love

Worship is at 9 am Sundays, in person or online—or you can join us later on YouTube. Links to the bulletin and YouTube channel can be found on our website:

<https://www.zionithaca.org/worship>

Calendar

- December 3** 9:00 am—Worship with Holy Communion
Christmas program practice after worship
- December 6** 6:00 pm—Advent Midweek at Grace
- December 10** 9:00 am—Worship
Program practice
- December 13** 6:00 pm—Advent midweek at Grace
- December 16** 9:00 am—Christmas Program practice
- December 17** 9:00 am—Christmas program
Treats in fellowship hall after program
- December 20** 6:00 pm—Advent midweek at Grace
- December 24** No morning worship. I'll offer an online reflection
7:00 pm—Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
- December 31** 9:00 am—Worship

December helpers

Cleaners—Diane and Charlie

Usher—Charlie

Lector—Carol

Communion Asst.—Megan

Acolyte—

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