

Jeff's Jottings

Encounters with the Holy

December 21, 2018

By Jeff Japinga

Executive Presbyterian

*How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is given;
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.*

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Tonight, December 21, the winter solstice, marks the single longest night in the calendar year and the commencement of the winter season in the northern hemisphere. For many, this day can be both a physical reminder of the effects of the absence of light, but also a spiritual reminder of what else we find absent in our lives: a loved one who has died, whether recently or long past; hope; peace; joy.

This season of Advent, lived out in the darkness of the climate, can be a reminder of all those things; some churches will mark this reality with a “Longest Night” or “Blue Christmas” service, in which we acknowledge the darkness that sometimes envelops our own souls.

Yet these rhythms of our natural world can also be an invitation, not simply on the mystery and power of our God and created universe, but also on the re-creation we ourselves, like the natural world around us, are continuously experiencing. This week’s Art and Faith in Advent invites us into the [meeting of Elizabeth and Mary](#), and into a realization that a glimpse of God’s magnificence can indeed fill us with wonder and awe.

As we eagerly await the nativity of Jesus at Christmastime, the long nights of the advent season invite us into reflection upon our waiting for the Lord’s return, expectantly, the hope of Mary ringing in our ears, seeking to glimpse the holiness of God.

May these final days of Advent be ones of deep meaning for you.