***From Our Conference Minister***

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***Waking Into Advent*** (Mark 13:24-37*)*

This Sunday is the first Sunday of Advent, which marks the beginning of year B, a new liturgical church year.

The poem ‘***Twas the Beginning of Advent*** by Todd Jenkins expresses an invitation and challenge for the Advent season:

*A baby, it seems, once had been born*

*In the mid-east somewhere on that first holy-day morn.*

*But what does that mean for folks like us,*

*Who've lost ourselves in the hoopla and fuss?*

*Can we re-learn the art of wondering and waiting,*

*Of hoping and praying, and anticipating?*

*Can we let go of all the things and the stuff?*

*Can we open our hands and our hearts long enough?*

*Can we open our eyes and open our ears?*

*Can we find him again after all of these years?*

*Will this year be different from all the rest?*

*Will we be able to offer him all of our best?*

*---excerpt from* ***‘Twas The Beginning of Advent***

*'Twas the beginning of Advent and all through the Church*

*Our hope was all dying-- we'd given up on the search.*

*It wasn't so much that Christ wasn't invited,*

*But after 2,000 plus years we were no longer excited.*

*Oh, we knew what was coming-- no doubt about that.*

*And that was the trouble-- it was all "old hat."*

*November brought the first of an unending series of pains*

*With carefully orchestrated advertising campaigns.*

*There were gadgets and dolls and all sorts of toys.*

*Enough to seduce even the most devout girls and boys.*

*Unfortunately, it seemed, no one was completely exempt*

*From this seasonal virus that did all of us tempt.*

*The priests and prophets and certainly the kings*

*Were all so consumed with the desire for "things!"*

*It was rare, if at all, that you'd hear of the reason*

*For the origin of this whole holy-day season.*

Advent is a time of expectation, anticipation, and preparation for celebrating Jesus’ coming into the hearts of those who believe. His coming brings us hope that he will usher in God’s kingdom in all its fullness; but no one knows when that will happen.

During this season of Advent, may the anticipation of Jesus’ coming overflow into our daily lives. May we also heed the wisdom of a little boy who, while on a shopping trip with his mother, exclaimed *“I am glad I know there is no Santa. Now I can focus on Jesus this Christmas!”*

May it be so.

Prayer:

Come, O come Emmanuel. May you find us, your church, awake and ready. Come Lord Jesus, come. There is still room in our hearts for you. Amen!

*In Christ,*

*Monica*

Rev. Dr. Monica Dawkins-Smith

Conference Minister and President