

Peace Among Us

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According to the annual church calendar, Advent is the beginning of the new liturgical year. Each year we start anew waiting for change to come into the world. Of course, the change we wait for is God acting for us, and for our salvation through Jesus Christ entering into the world. Today, we wait for the return of Jesus Christ as we celebrate his first appearance as a fragile infant, thousands of years before. We celebrate and focus on the birth of Jesus Christ through the season, remembering the angels that sang “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors”. These celebrations are bursting with traditions that have been shaped through years of repetition. The excitement and anticipation of these traditions brings “peace among us”.

There is also much uncertainty as to when Jesus Christ’s return will actually take place. In this waiting changes happen in our lives, both planned and unexpected.

Changes in our traditions can transpire after the death of a beloved family member who truly represented the season to us, when a dear friend moves away, or when you find yourself relocated far away from long-time friends and family. These changes reshape favorite traditions that have brought “peace among us” to distress and discomfort.

The same holds true for traditions of the season of Advent. In my lifetime the candles of the advent wreath have changed from three purple and one pink to four blue candles. The colors of the paraments have also changed from purple to blue. This change of colors also came with a change in the theme of the season. When it was purple there was more of an emphasis on the coming king because purple is a royal color. Now according to the ELCA website; “Blue is associated with Advent, suggesting hope. This association originated in Scandinavia, probably because purple dye was too expensive for churches to use.”



As we go into the Advent season we will continue performing some traditions that date further back than wreaths or colors. In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke Jesus teaches the disciples the Lord’s Prayer. Although these Gospels were written later in the first century I am quite confident the Lord’s Prayer has been prayed since Jesus taught it to the disciples. The promise of forgiveness through the body and blood of Jesus Christ is a tradition that was written about in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and in 1st Corinthians. This tradition is another that we can be fairly confident began soon after Jesus taught it to the disciples. Many believe that people have been professing one form of creed or another since the first or second century. It is said that a form of the Apostles’ Creed was used widely although it was not finally complete as we profess it today until late in the fourth century. The Nicene Creed came about in 325

when Constantine called church leaders together at the Council of Nicaea and further amended in 381 at the First Council of Constantinople.

Praying the Lord's Prayer, receiving the Lord's Supper, and professing faith through a creed have been bringing "peace among us" through the changes the church has witnessed and will continue as new traditions are forged into the long standing ones.

I pray that through this Advent and Christmas season "peace" will be delivered to you through both celebration and loss of long standing tradition.