



# ADVENTures

a weekly newsletter

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April 19, 2020 The Second of Easter

Worship with Bishop Love at <https://albanyepiscopaldiocese.org/contact-us/>

## At Advent

All services at Advent are suspended until further notice. You may call the church office (440-871-6685) and expect to have your call answered between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday. If you call outside of those hours, please leave a message and we will respond as soon as we receive it. In case of emergency, please contact Dick McCormick (440-413-0189) directly.

## JOHN 20:19-31 A FRESH START WITH GOD

**John 20:30-31 (NASB)** *Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*

In John's Gospel, Mary Magdalene had been to the tomb and seen it empty. She had run and told the disciples; Peter and John had gone back with her to check it out. The disciples then went back home – but Mary stayed at the tomb crying and that's when she met the Risen Christ. In the verse before the one we start with this morning says: *"So Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and related to them what He had told her."*

So why didn't they go looking for him? Wouldn't you have gone looking for him? I think I would. But they didn't. They stayed behind locked doors. John said that they had locked the door "for fear of the Jews." What were they really running from? Who were they really hiding from? Perhaps they were actually afraid of running into Jesus! They had every reason to be afraid.

The last time Jesus had seen the disciples, they were deserting Him at His arrest in Gethsemane. Peter had stayed with him, but then he had denied knowing Him at all. The guilt had been so bad that Judas Iscariot had killed himself. How must the rest of them have been feeling? They were desperately ashamed of themselves. Rather than going out searching for Jesus, it would be far safer to lock the door and hope the whole problem would go away!

Perhaps we are more like the disciples than we want to admit! How often have you locked the door to keep Jesus out? Maybe some part of your past: something of which you're particularly ashamed. Maybe some fear for the future. Sometimes, we are frightened of what Jesus might think, what Jesus might do. So, we lock up our heart, try to keep Jesus out, locking ourselves in, for fear of what might happen.

And sometimes, we are not even honest with ourselves about why we are hiding or what we are hiding from. Maybe the disciples weren't keeping the Jews out, they were keeping themselves in. What does Jesus do? He does what He always does when we try to hide from Him: *"Jesus came and stood among them..."* He enters the room and breaks into their shame.

He said to them, "Peace be with you." These words are the exact opposite of fear, shame and anxiety. He knows our failures, He knows our weaknesses, He knows everything we have every done wrong. And He says, the past is over, let's move forward. There is absolutely no mention of the past. It's done – it's finished: it's not even remembered anymore. We just get this amazing declaration: *"He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'."*

Jesus is inviting us to start completely afresh and go right back to the beginning with Him. In fact, what He is doing is taking us right back to the Garden of Eden, for two reasons:

First, it is in the Garden of Eden that humanity first hides from God. *Genesis 3:8: "That evening, they heard the Lord God walking in the garden, and they hid from him among the trees."* Adam and Eve hid from God among the trees. The disciples were hiding from God behind closed doors.

Second, in *Genesis 2:7 "Then the Lord God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it; he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live."* God breathed on Adam and he began to live. In John 20, Jesus breathes on His disciples and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, they are re-born.

Here is the incredible truth of the Gospel. That we can hide from God because of our shame, we can hide from Him out of shame for our past, we can hide from Him because of our bad habits and failures and weakness. But because He loves us so, so much, God will come and seek us out and find us. He will not bring up the past, He will not make us wallow in shame or guilt, He won't humiliate us. He will seek us out and He will find us, and He will say, *"Peace be with you."*

## This Week at Advent

### Sunday, April 19

**8:00 a.m. SERVICE SUSPENDED**  
9:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal: **Suspended**  
Bible Study: **Suspended**  
**10:00 a.m. SERVICE SUSPENDED**

### Wednesday, April 22

7:00 a.m. Men's Bible Study at Advent: **Suspended**  
9:00 a.m. Wednesday Morning Prayer Group  
7:00 p.m. The Praise Community: **Suspended**

### Sunday, April 26

**8:00 a.m. SERVICE SUSPENDED**  
9:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal: **Suspended**  
Bible Study: **Suspended**  
**10:00 a.m. SERVICE SUSPENDED**

### Rebuilding the "Physical and Spiritual Gates of Jerusalem" and Doing the Same After COVID-19

My quiet time this week included readings from Nehemiah Chapters 2 and 8 and the devotional Today in the Word from Moody Bible Institute. I am struck by the parallels between events during Nehemiah's and Ezra's time in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and our times in the 21<sup>st</sup> century AD. The Persians under Nebuchadnezzar caused horrible deprivation of the city, eventually plundered it, captured or killed its leaders, dispersed the common people, took many into exile into Babylon, and filled all Jewish people with fear. The Persians destroyed the temple, Jerusalem and the walls surrounding the city. The Jewish nation was in ruins – literally physically, materially, emotionally, spiritually. I venture to say many in our community and nation have similar feelings and fears right now.

The Lord empowered Nehemiah to lead the rebuilding of the gates and walls of Jerusalem. He gave Nehemiah the courage to confront the Persian king to ask for permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild, to be given safe passage through enemy territories, and to be provided necessary resources to rebuild. After he planned the project, Nehemiah shared his plans with the Jewish leaders remaining in Jerusalem. "The God of heaven will give us success." (Nehemiah 2:17-20) Read all of Chapter 2.

Then, in Chapter 8 (read it also) Nehemiah writes that in addition to physically rebuilding the gates and walls of Jerusalem, there was an urgent need to rebuild the "spiritual gates and walls" of God's people. That is, the returned exiles needed to return not only to the land but to the Lord Himself. They needed to confess their sins and rededicate themselves to covenant faith and obedience. As Ezra read aloud God's word to the people, they listened and wept over their sins. But Nehemiah told them that today was to be a day of celebration (vv. 9-12).

The story of rebuilding in these 2 chapters gives us hope for restoration of everything destroyed by COVID-19 and its aftermath. The warning to confess our sins comes with the promise that when we do so spiritual rebuilding and restoration comes to us. The Lord is calling us to lift up those areas in our lives that need to be restored and we rely on His promise to make everything new. "Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is our strength"! (v10b)

Regards,  
Dick

## Prayer Request

### Health and Recovery

Lillian Kwasny	Dave Luptak	Joan Joye
Mary Lou Dixon	Marilyn Decker	Velta Sanborn
Bob Allen	Karen Zolar	Rose Walker
Barb Frank	Lois Zolar	Arthur Beel
Michael Uhrich	Sharon Rice	George Belinsky
Bill & Judy Arkley	Steve Boyce	Shirley Moore

### Friends of Advent

Toni Kulma, wife of Pastor Kulma	Ken and Jim
Eliza Jennings residents	Jack Morgan
Trevor, grandson of Art Beel	Richard Ward, Jr
Liz Schilling, friend of JoAnn Beck	Fr. Richard Lutz
Laura Lenis, friend of JoAnn Beck	

### Safety Protection

David Arkley, Detective for Cleveland Police  
Son of Bill & Judy Arkley  
Rachel Moffitt, ER Nurse daughter of Bill & Judy Arkley

*Please contact the church office if you would like your name added or removed from our list.*

## Finances at Advent Ahead of Budget!

Praise the Lord! Because of your faithfulness, Advent is ahead of budget in both revenue and net Income for the first quarter of 2020. While we don't yet have final numbers, we project a positive variance on revenue of almost \$1,000 and a positive variance on net income of more than \$5,000. Thanks to those who have kept their pledge current. Thanks also to those who forward-paid a portion of their pledge. Wonderful!

You may have heard that the recently-past legislation referred to as the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security or CARES Act made provision for charitable organizations like Advent to apply for forgivable loans under the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). Jr. Warden Ray Busony, Treasurer Gary Conaway and I discussed whether Advent should apply. Advent's loan would have been approximately \$13,000 if granted. The Christian Law Association (CLA) cautions PPP loan rules and regulations could remove long-recognized exemptions available to churches in their hiring practices and in the provision of their services to those who attend. The receipt of these funds is clearly the receipt of government funds, which can be used against the interests of Advent in any future litigation. Lawsuits that CLA has prevailed in for fifty years have often been won because the ministry never received government funds as a matter of faith and principle. Ray, Gary and I concluded the reward was not worth the risk. Advent did not apply for a PPP loan.  
Dick McCormick, Sr. Warden