

Dear Friends,

When our clocks were set back a few weeks ago, I think my own biological sleep cycle went haywire. The last few weeks, I find myself wide awake at three or three-thirty a.m. Sometimes I force myself to stay in bed for another hour or so, hoping sleep will come. But more often, I've gotten up. What was once the mysterious "middle-of-the-night" to me is now my silent candle-lit morning. I have read that in most monasteries the day starts at three a.m. with morning prayer. Always drawn to the contemplative life, perhaps I am growing a monk's heart. Well, at least a monk-like sleep pattern...



Well, at least I have good timing (!), as Advent is upon us; the season that starts with cries of "Keep awake!" "Keep Watch!" and "Prepare yourself for the coming of God!" More than any other time, these days after Thanksgiving and right before Advent bring back to me my parent's home in the Connecticut woods. I can see myself in the early morning darkness sitting on the sofa in the "tree house," the room surrounded with windows, tall evergreens, and wildlife. It is the calm after the wonderful Thanksgiving chaos, and everyone else, sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews, has gone home. In this space, I would plan the Advent Liturgies. It was not hard to call upon the beauty of the dark, the fecundity of the silence, the expectation of dawn. I had many rich hours before I would hear mom open the garage door, going out to get the breakfast bagels. And thus the day began.

So now, it must be at least 4, I sit in the dark and enter my Advent space. I would like to invite you all into it. It is a place of deep longing, somewhat like the homesickness of one missing her childhood home. Only the longing is not looking backward toward the past, but to the present and future, where the Spirit is at work and our fulfillment is in the days to come. So let us keep awake and prepare together.



This year at First Church we will be raising up creation's Advent, learning from the creatures that surround us how they prepare in this frosty season for the new, tender life to be born. They have much to teach us and I know they will fill our hearts with wonder.

All the blessings of Advent to you.

*Kate*