

“Rebirth of A New Kina Normal”

1st Sunday of Advent - Hope

World AIDS Sunday

November 28, 2021

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Malachi 3:1-4
Luke 3:1-6

Poem: “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer

*“I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth’s sweet flowing breast;
A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.”*

In his novel, Chaim Potok writes: “All beginnings are hard. I can remember my mother murmuring those words while I lay in bed with a fever. “Children are often sick, darling. That’s the way it is with children. All beginnings are hard. You’ll be all right soon.””

So, here we are church, wondering what God is up to during this Advent Season of newness. A new church year in our liturgical calendar. As I mentioned a few Sundays back, one of the common themes that has emerged from many conversations with other pastors and agency leaders is that the “normal” we knew in March of 2020 is gone. There is a new kina normal now – and one that is still emerging and changing. I believe our Advent Theme of – “A New Bethlehem Kina Church” really speaks to what we are finding ourselves in as we begin to regather. If anything, we have also learned since March of 2020 is that we must be at the ready to quickly change and adapt, all while being ready for what comes next. Who hasn’t changed since March of 2020?

The past few weeks, maybe even over a month, myself and five other members have been taking the Adaptive Leadership Training Workshop sponsored by our UCC Hawaii Conference. Identify an area that needs to be worked on – formulate some ideas, even if they have not been tried before – put forth a plan – and implement the plan. If it does not work, adapt, and change to a different route. Be okay with failure, do not be afraid to try something new. Our group has identified that we need to call all of the members on our phone tree and see how everyone is doing as

we emerge from this pandemic. See where everyone is at, check in on those who have not been here for some time, are they still members. You will be receiving a call from one of us in the next few weeks, so please don't hang up on us. This is our way in putting for our project for the workshop. What we find out will be put forth to formulate a plan moving forward as a church that is emerging from a pandemic.

Beginnings are difficult, especially when we have become used to doing things a certain way. WE all have experienced beginnings in some form – marriage, new home, new job, illness, etc. As we begin this new liturgical calendar year with Advent, as vulnerable as we may find ourselves during this pandemic – with hope, all things are possible...Amen Church? With hope, new possibilities are possible...Amen Church? I

pray for us to allow ourselves to be vulnerable in these new beginnings and if we fail – do not fret – adapt to changing the course and keep moving forward together. Let us not be afraid to try is the main component of our workshop. O God, protect us as we emerge into a new kina Church and try some crazy things – guide us with your grace and wisdom.

Hope encourages us – hope keeps the advent flame burning. The God who plucks us from our foundation, also replants...Amen? The God who tears down, also rebuilds...Amen? The God who erases, also writes new things in our hearts...Amen? It is as if we got plucked by God as the church we used to be in March of 2020 and replanted for something new, creating a new Bethlehem story for our time. Our task is to bring forth ideas and innovation recalling Pastor Jack's hymn – "We Can Reshape the Future." "The days are surely coming" Church! Ready or not – they will come. We must use our time of Advent to be prepared with oil on hand – but we must be ready to do the necessary work ahead of us, we

must prepare our hearts, mind, and spirit for the rebirth of our new emerging Church.

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon this world."

Before Israel could focus on its future, they had to relinquish their past. For 40 years out in the desert, generations changed, mindsets changed allowing God's wisdom and guidance to reshape

their future. That was us for a year and nine months now beloveds, we wondered from the Sanctuary of our Homes as a deployed church, we wondered about this unseeable virus. We followed the wisdom given to our scientists and doctors and now as we re-emerge, let us continue to follow God's wisdom that is leading us to that new Bethlehem Kina Church. We can reshape our future, we have hope in our corner, we have God in our corner, and most importantly, we have one another in our corner. We must relinquish of what was and

move forward to what can be. Tear down and rebuild – uproot and replant. A problem that some of the Israelite people had – and as Theologian Bogeman states – “many want to return back to Pharaoh's Egypt.” They had food there, they had shelter there, they had protection there, never mind the labor they were doing for someone other than God. Let us not get caught up on going back to Pharaoh's Egypt, let us not get caught up on going back to the old “normal” beloveds, because that normal is gone. We have a chance to reshape our future and adapt to whatever God has instore for us. This Advent season, we have a chance go give birth to a new kina normal.

Jeremiah reminded his followers in 30:12-13 – “Your hurt is incurable, your wound is grievous. There is no one to uphold your cause, no medicine for your wound, no healing for you.” Then he goes on with verse 14 – “All your lovers have forgotten you; they care nothing for you; for I have dealt you the blow of an enemy.” We grieve to what has been lost to permit newness. We cannot protect the status quo any longer – we must emerge

to a new Bethlehem Kina Church. Adaptive leaders look to the new possibilities and Adaptive Christian Leaders are curious to see what God is up to on the other side. Let us be that kind of Church this Advent Season Iao – let us be curious of possibilities and curious to see what God has instore for us. What is God up to this Advent Season? A hope filled future for sure...Amen? We all just need to be curious and make it happen.

Let us close with this beloveds. The new emerging Church is coming – are we ready? There are those who mourn of what was and there are those who hope for the new possibilities. Hope is what kept the Israelite people from returning to Pharaoh’s Egypt. Hope is what has kept this Church moving forward and hope is what will move us to a new kina normal. The “days that are surely

coming” is being shaped by what we do today – adapt – renew – and re-engage as a whole Church Body of Christ.

Amen, Amene, Ashe, A-ho, and Alleluia.