



The Beacon

St. Christopher's
Community Church

7902 Steamboat
Island Road NW
Olympia, WA 98502
(360) 866-2111

Sunday Worship and
Sunday School
10:30 a.m.

December 2015

An Apology for Santa

No, not a letter saying sorry to Santa Claus. Rather, this is a little reflection on beauty, goodness, truth, and mystery... all wrapped in a red suit.

"Here is an oft-quoted story of eight-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon, who wrote to The New York Sun in 1897. Here is her letter, and the editor's reply.

*Dear Editor, I am 8 years old.
Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus.
Papa says, "If you see it in THE SUN, then it is true."
Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?
Virginia O'Hanlon, 115 W 95th Street*

Dear Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on



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Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and un-seeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus? Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood."

Thank you to Seiyaku.com for this delightful reflection.

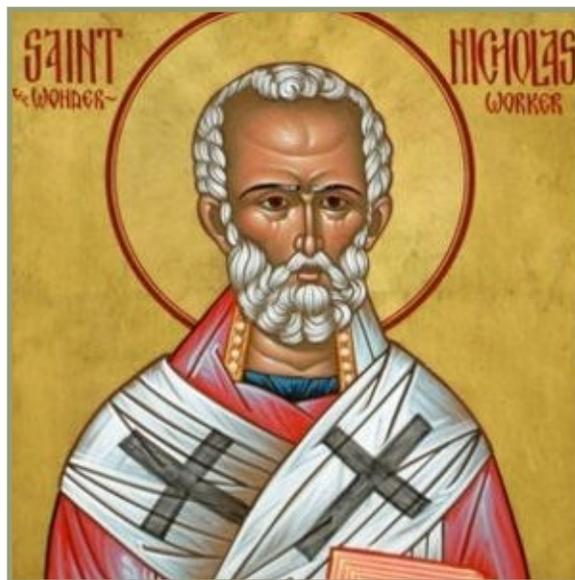
For Further Thought:

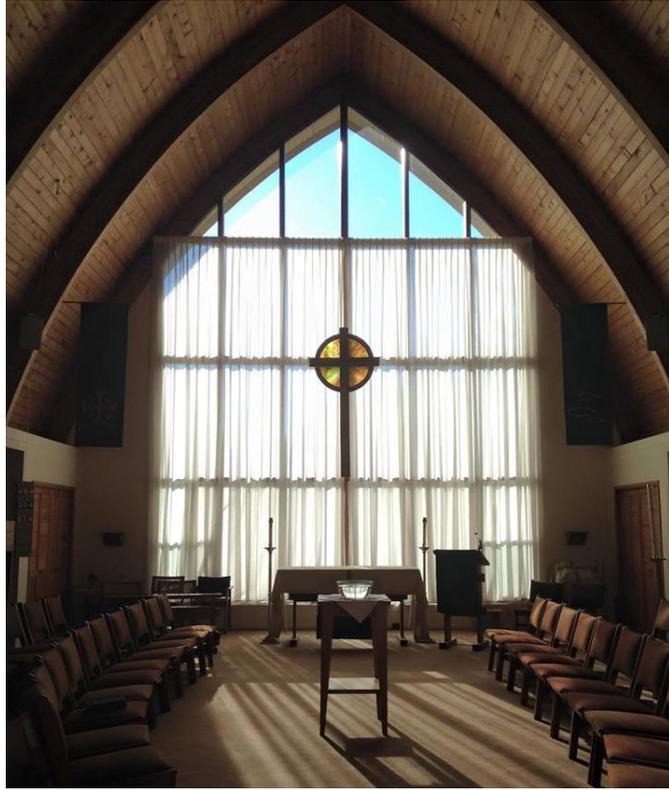
"We believe in God the Father Almighty... maker... of all that is, seen and unseen." – The Nicene Creed

Saint Nicholas is a historical figure, a Christian who was Bishop of Myra.

Jesus said to the Sadducees, "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now God is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live to God." - Luke 20:37-38

That Nicholas lives seems a matter of Christian faith. What he is currently doing is still a mystery.





Did you know?

- The Diocese of Olympia held its annual Convention in November? Among the resolutions was the act to lower the assessment rate that congregations pay to the diocese to 15%. A few years ago we were at 17%! [Click here for a video recap.](#)
- The Feast of St. Nicholas is celebrated on December 6th. St. Nicholas was a historical bishop of Myra noted for his anonymous generosity in the Spirit of Christ. “When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing...” - Jesus in [Matthew 6:3](#)
- God loves you. There is nothing you can do to make God love you more, and nothing you can do to make God love you less. God loves you. [See Romans 8:38-39.](#)
- You can celebrate Christmas for twelve whole days after December 25th! See [fullhomelydivinity.org](#) (“Twelve Days of Christmas” under the “Customs and Traditions” tab) for more info.

Advent: “Coming, but not yet here”

The season of Advent is something of an anomaly to most. Advent means “coming.” It celebrates the season *before* Christ has come. As any advent-ure reader knows, the resolution at the end of the book is only as good as the pages that precede it. So, I believe it is with Christmas.

As I searched for Advent music on the web I was struck by how many results were Christmas carols proclaiming Christ is born. In this high-speed instant gratification society, to stop and listen to our longing is not in vogue. We are encouraged to hurry and indiscriminately fill whatever need we might have with whatever is readily available. In contrast, Advent is the time to practice patience, stillness, longing, discernment, and hope.

Advent is a counter-cultural time. It is a time to look deeply into our hunger and thirst for God. It is a time see *why* we need a Savior. And contrary to the secular messages we may hear, our deepest longings cannot be truly filled with stuff or family or lovers or food or merriment. True Advent longing reveals those things that only God can fulfill. Perhaps that’s why Advent is not a secular holiday. We cannot get God on a BOGO deal or from a catalogue or at an online retailer. If God is going to save, then *God* is going to save us, “and not we ourselves.” (Compare [Psalm 100:3](#) and [Ephesians 2:8-10](#)).

Perhaps that is why we look back to the prophets like Isaiah, Daniel, and Jeremiah, who, facing situations too big for the people of God, did not choose despair, depression, and denial, but found instead the message of hope in God’s promises and character. And afterwards, God’s great challenge to become different and act differently – a counter cultural message.

So what *are* we to do? At seminary we used to joke about the “Advent Police” who would come and badger anyone who had Christmas decorations up too soon or Christmas carols playing before Christmas. I’m not advocating such fundamentalism. I do suggest that we begin to incorporate more and more the Spirit of Advent expectation into our home celebrations. Here are some suggestions...



Suggestions for Advent:

Decorate an Advent Room – It's hard to wait to put up the Christmas Tree and all the red and gold of Christmas. Instead of saying 'no' to these things, try decorating one room for Advent. Use greens, silvers, purples, and or blues. Note that these colors are akin to Jewish celebration of Hanukah and are readily available.

Keep an Advent Wreath – Put an Advent Wreath on your dinner table or on the coffee table or next to where you have devotions. Light the candles, one for each Sunday of Advent that has passed, as you have a meal, stop for devotions and prayer, or simply sit for a cup of tea or coffee.

Follow the Jesse Tree – This is an excellent devotional. Each day contains an ornament or symbol of one of Jesus' ancestors. The Bible reading that accompanies each of the ornaments reminds us of why we are looking for a Messiah, a Christ to come and save us.

Learn an Advent Carol – If you like Christmas Carols you may be delighted by the number of marvelous Advent Carols. Here are some suggestions:

“Lo, he comes with clouds descending,”

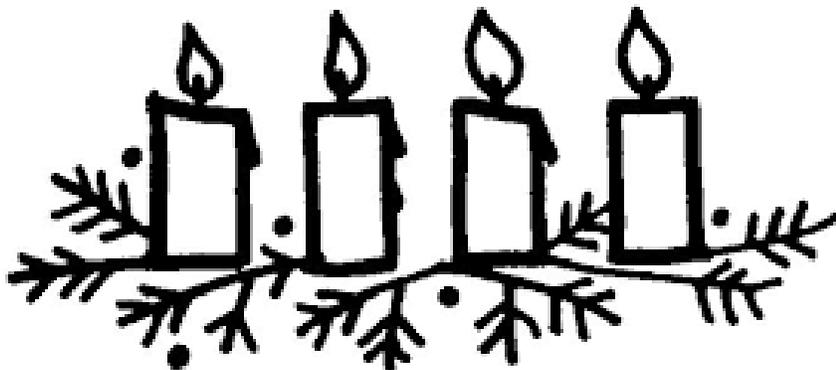
“Comfort, comfort ye my people,”

“People look East the time is near”

“Come thou long expected Jesus.”

If you are looking music, you may have to create a playlist to actually get Advent carols. Many are mixed in with Christmas carols.

Go see a Festival of Advent Lessons and Carols – If you are the type to enjoy performing arts this time of year like the Nutcracker ballet or Handel's Messiah, see if you can find a performance entitled “An (Advent) Festival of (Nine) Lessons and Carols.” It's a marvelous celebration of Holy Scripture and song which, if the performers stick to Advent, anticipates the coming of Christ.





St. Christopher's Community Church
(Episcopal/ELCA)
7902 Steamboat Island Road NW
Olympia, WA 98502

St. Christopher's Community Church

Office Hours

Mon. & Wed. —8:00am–12pm

Tues. & Thurs. —2:30-5:30pm

or by appointment

360-866-2111

office@stchristopherolympia.org

Pastor & Priest

Fr. James Thibodeaux

Sunday Worship Hours

Worship and Sunday School

at 10:30 a.m., with nursery

care