



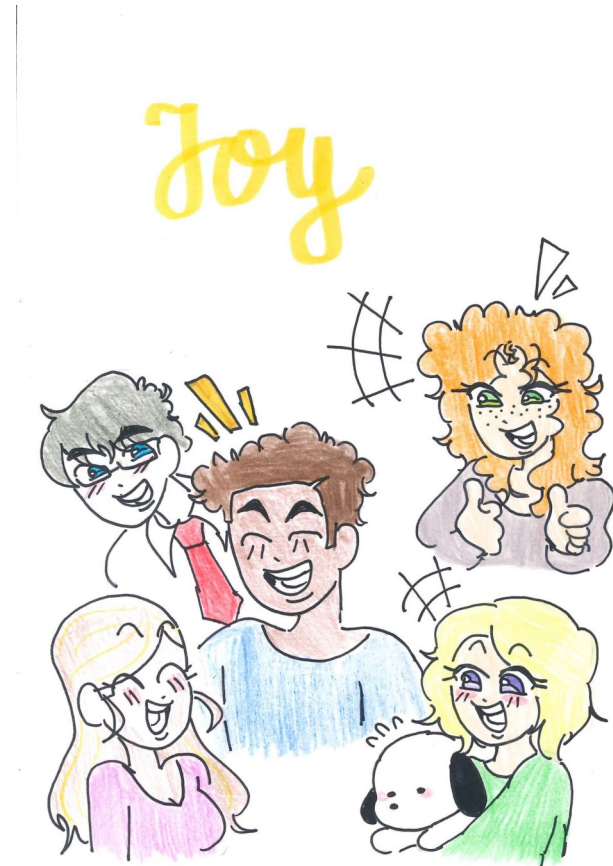
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Advent Reflections



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Advent Reflections

This devotional contains reflections, artwork, and prayers for a portion of the Advent season created by the members and friends of Church of the Holy Cross UCC in Hilo, Hawai'i. Advent is a season of preparation and of expectation, an awareness of what has already happened and what is still to come. May these devotional offerings help you find the hope, peace, joy, and love of God within your soul.



Sunday, December 14

Psalm 46:1

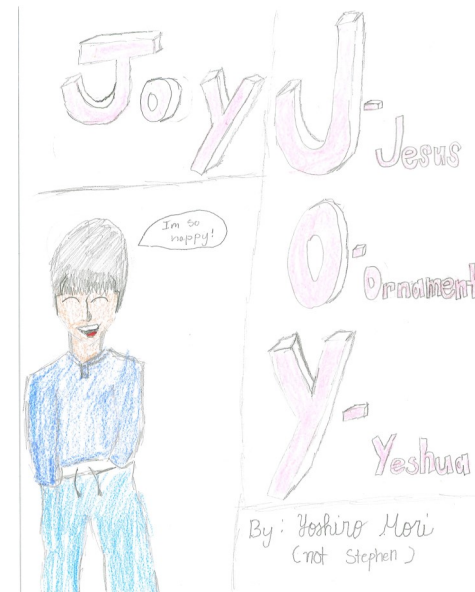
Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy.

JOY is a feeling of great happiness which over comes one's whole being. There have been many occasions in my life where joy has prevailed, but the one thing I remember most often is when we were visiting our grandchildren in California. Alex, maybe about 5 years old, was my shadow! We played games, read stories, went for walks, played outdoors, and of course, I kept him well fed! Every day I would hear him calling, "Grammy, where are you?" I would hear his footsteps as he looked for me!

He wanted to be with me – what a blessing! What Joy!

Anne Sadayasu

Monday, December 15



Yoshiro Mori

Tuesday, December 16

I grew up in a plantation camp, way up in the foothills of Mauna Kea – surrounded by tall cane fields.

Yes, we had dolls – those cute pink “cupid” plastic naked dolls you dare not squeeze or you’ll leave indentations all over.

I can’t recall, but I must’ve excelled in something, because my uncle, who lived in the next village over, heard about it, came with a beautifully wrapped box for me.

I tore open and out came a beautiful blonde, blue-eyed “Mama-Mama” doll, who “blinked” at me! A doll that cries “Mama-Mama” and “blinks” at you! Oh, my! What JOY! I’ll not forget.

Amy Shiroma

Wednesday, December 17

Marie Kondo’s minimalist advice to keep only what “sparks joy” invites us to consider what joy truly means. As I reflect on my own possessions, I realize that few things actually spark that deep, explosive joy I imagine. For me, joy is more than liking something—it’s a moment when body, mind, heart, and soul are in perfect alignment, overflowing with exuberance that cannot be contained.

True joy often arrives unexpectedly, breaking into ordinary moments with extraordinary force. I remember the thrill of seeing a sunrise complete with rainbows and hearing Cat

Sunday, December 21

Matthew 6:26

Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

ESA



become the new treasures.

Scripture reminds us that sacredness is found wherever hearts gather: **“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”** (Matthew 18:20, NIV) This means that even if traditions shift, the essence of Advent—God’s presence and love—remains unchanged.

Change, though difficult, can open the door to new joys. Isaiah 43:19 says, **“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?”** God meets us in our grief and gently leads us toward new beginnings. Sometimes, the loss of tradition allows us to see beauty in unexpected places—a child’s laughter, a quiet moment of gratitude, the heartfelt hug, or the warmth of togetherness.

Prayer

Gracious God, as traditions change and memories linger, help me to find joy in Your presence and in those gathered around me. Renew my heart this Advent and let love be my greatest gift. Amen.

Lorraine Davis

Steven’s “Morning has Broken” at that very moment, the delight of a surprise reunion with a dear friend, and the awe of witnessing whales breach just offshore on an already beautiful day. In each instance, joy erupted—unplanned, uncontainable, and unforgettable.

Advent is a season that prepares us for such surprises. We wait for the coming of Christ, the fulfillment of hope, and the eruption of joy into our world. The angel’s words in Luke 2:10-11 (NIV) remind us: “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” Joy is not the same as happiness or contentment. It cannot always be manufactured or held onto. Instead, joy is a gift—a response to God’s presence, to love, to beauty, to wonder.

During Advent, we prepare our hearts to be surprised by joy, to be overwhelmed by the goodness of God breaking into our lives. Ask yourself: Where have I experienced joy that cannot be contained? How can I open myself to joy this Advent, even in the midst of waiting or uncertainty?

Prayer:

God of Joy, as I journey through Advent, help me to recognize and receive the joy you offer. Let my heart be open to your surprises, my soul ready to sing, and my life prepared to welcome Christ. May your joy explode within me and overflow to those around me. Amen.

Lorraine Davis

Thursday, December 18

2 Samuel 6:14-15

David danced before the LORD with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

This scene of national celebration is... somewhat deceptive. The “ark of the LORD” – the chest Moses had built to contain the stone tablets carved by God – had been stolen, held for ransom, caused accidents, blessed people (um, the wrong people), and generally puzzled the people of Israel. Some of David’s vigorous dancing may have been a prayer to God along the lines of: “Please don’t let anything bad happen *this* time.”

Joy rarely comes unmixed with other feelings or sensations. Every time I greet my children, I feel a tiny twinge about the way they are not children any more. I wouldn’t exchange them for their younger selves for an instant, but the feeling will persist.

Unlike happiness, joy can live with the mixed feelings. It is more robust than happiness, which cracks all too easily at the unexpected or unwanted. Joy has deeper roots. It rises to greater heights.

Prayer:

With all the feelings, O God, we raise our joy to you. We rejoice in our gladness. We rejoice in our sorrow. We rejoice in your presence – which is always. Amen.

ESA

Friday, December 19

Feel JOY in your heart

Find JOY in every moment

Freely share this gift

Haiku by Carol Morioka

Saturday, December 20

Advent is traditionally a season of anticipation, hope, and preparation. Yet, for me, it also brings a bittersweet awareness of change—of loved ones who are no longer present, of rituals that have faded, and of a world that feels unfamiliar. The phrase, “the holidays look different this year,” resonates deeply.

It’s important for me to acknowledge the ache of loss. Grief for people, places, and traditions is a natural part of my being human. The discomfort I feel is real and valid. Advent, with its quiet waiting and longing, offers space to honor these feelings rather than rush past them. If you have experienced loss or have had major life changes, I invite you to sit with your memories, to let yourself mourn what’s gone, and to recognize the significance those traditions held.

Yet, Advent is also a time of renewal. In the midst of change, there is an invitation to rediscover what truly matters. The heart of the season is not found in perfect decorations or elaborate meals, but in the presence of those gathered—whether in person or in spirit. The love shared, the laughter, and the simple moments of connection