
The New Life of Advent
Chapel in the Park United Church
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Based on our expectations of Advent

I want to share a story with you.

At one university, the College of Engineering had an annual competition. Students would be given a “cargo” and they would have to add components to the cargo and then make it fly. Before the competition, the students would be told something about the cargo, and given a specific objective. Students came to the competition with parts they thought might work, and then adapted them to the cargo as part of the competition.

One year students were told the cargo would be "like a golf ball". And that the winners would be the team that added the fewest number of parts to the cargo - while still making the cargo fly of course.

Now of course, this was not a real competition. Calling it a competition was just a fun way to do some homework. And it was always a hit. But somehow - on this particular year - three grade 5 students from a local public school heard about the competition - and they entered.

On the day of the competition, the teams brought their parts. The teams all brought basically the same things: wings, an electric motor, a tail assembly. When the teams were given their cargo, they were given eggs. The teams spent the morning adapting their parts to fit the eggs. The grade 5 team however did not touch the parts they had brought. They spent their time visiting, and watching the other teams at work.

The organizers figured they knew what was going on. The parts that the grade 5 team had brought were hopeless. The tiny motor they brought would never fly the massive battery they had brought - even without the egg. They were - as expected - not in the same league as university engineering students. But the youth seemed to be enjoying being part of the event. So all was well.

When it was time for the test flights, to avoid embarrassing the grade 5 team, the judges just walked past the grade 5 team. But the team called them back - "when is our turn?" So the judges said to the grade 5 team - "Ok, show us what you've got". One of the grade 5 students held out his hand with the egg in it and said, "We don't have to add any parts. This is an egg. Our design is to let the egg hatch and it will fly all by itself".

That story always reminds me of Advent. In the competition, students added parts to an egg to make it fly. During Advent, we too feel we have to add things to Advent in order to make feel Christmas real to us.

How often do we say we just need to buy one more gift, or host one more party to make Christmas come? How often we we think we need to add another component - one more string of lights - sing a particular Christmas carol - to make Christmas come? We like our traditions! For some of us, Christmas does not come until we have performed one of our ritual practices. I myself am wondering if we can somehow pull of a late Christmas Eve service because that is my tradition.

And yet - Christmas - like an egg - already contains new life. Christmas - like an egg - already contains the gift of life. We don't need to add a motor to an egg to make it fly, we just need to wait for the egg to hatch. And we don't need to add "stuff" to Christmas so that Christmas comes, we just need to wait - but with vast openness and vulnerability - to accept the Advent that Christ is already in our midst.

We need to stop fussing about our Christmas preparations and embrace the fact that the new life is already in Christmas. We just need to slow down, allow ourselves to be vulnerable to whatever that new life looks like.

What will we find during Advent this year? Well, it depends on just how vulnerable and open we are prepared to be and to see. That is what makes Advent so exciting.

Christmas is coming.

Amen.