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Pastoral Letter – December 2021

Dear sibling in Christ,

There is something magical, majestic, and mystical embodied in the season of Advent and then Christmas.

We know that the air will be filled with “Tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy; O, tidings of comfort and joy.” We know that the Advent candles will help us overcome the darkness. We know that the Christmas story of the manger in Bethlehem will impart constant goodwill and cheer.

Yet, some of us may find it challenging to get into the holiday mood and spirit in light of our societal and personal challenges.

The good news is that Advent is a season that offers us hope, and the opportunity to experience something that is transformative. Advent, the four weeks before Christmas, helps us recognize God’s initiative of love in the birth of Jesus and in Jesus’ promise to return in order to make a new heaven and a new earth.

When we look at the shabby condition of the world around us, sometimes our patience about things becoming better is affected. We, the faithful, may wonder whether things are going to become better. But Advent and Christmas remind us that it will become better. God’s peace will be triumphant over hostility. God will help us orient our lives into a future wherein God’s will becomes our own.

Advent and then Christmas are God’s initiative—an initiative spurred by love. Therefore, I encourage you to either explore the Advent lessons that make up our liturgical calendar in order to affirm God’s promises (see [RCA Liturgical Calendar | Reformed Church in America](#)) or to worship with us in person on Sundays at 10 a.m. or online ([Church | Rhinebeck Reformed Church](#))

[| United States](#)), or to worship with us on Christmas Eve during our traditional service of the lessons and the light at **7 p.m.**

Or, you may want to explore the deeper meaning of Advent and Christmas by slowing down and uttering the prayer offered below by Henri Nouwen.

*Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.
We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.
We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.*

The only hope worth having during this holiday season, and in this life, is the expectation that Christ will return.

May you have a blessed Advent and Christmas!

Pastor Luis