

Church of St. John The Evangelist, Elora
Rev'd John Lockyer
Sunday December 4, 2022
Second Sunday of Advent

May these words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts be now and always acceptable in thy sight. O Lord, our rock and Redeemer. Amen. [Ps. 19:14]

I'd like to begin my message this morning by reading from the writings of a well-known American Episcopalian – that is an American Anglican – his name is Robin Williams. And he wrote in *Late Night Show* fashion the top 10 reasons for being an Episcopalian.

So, in Letterman's style I thought I'd first share those with you:

[Top 10 reasons to be an Episcopalian (by Robin Williams)]

Number 10. No snake handling.

Number 9. You can believe in dinosaurs.

Number 8. Male and female God created them; male and female we ordain them.

Number 7. You don't have to check your brains at the door.

Number 6. Pew aerobics.

Number 5. Church year is colour-coded.

Number 4. Free wine on Sunday.

Number 3. All of the pageantry – none of the guilt.

Number 2. You don't have to know how to swim to get baptized.

And the Number One reason to be an Episcopalian:

1. No matter what you believe, there's bound to be at least one other Episcopalian who agrees with you.

As I thought about these reasons, I wanted to think a little bit more about #5: "The church year is colour-coded," because we are right in a time of much colour-coding now.

Three weeks ago, the colours in the church were white, And then they became violet or purple. They are soon going to become white again. And then they are going to be green. And then they are going to go purple again and so on.

Believe it or not, I think that is one of the most important things that we never pay much attention to -- the colour-changing seasons of the church year.

We mark out our space and celebrate it with walls which we then decorate with paint and stained glass. We are after all physical and spatial creatures that move in three-dimensional space. Yet, quite often we forget the most important dimension of all – Time.

We live our lives in time. And when time stops for us so does living in this space. That colour-coding of the church year reminds us that time is sacred, and that the time God has given you to be alive – to breathe and to enjoy this four-dimensional reality is limited.

I am reminded that time is somewhat like the way in which Hebrews thought about God. You could never see God in the future. As Moses learned you could not even see God's face to face in the present in this world. In fact, God covers Moses' eyes so that he was only able to glimpse God's glory after God had passed [*Exodus* 33:22].

There's a certain same similarity between thinking about God and thinking about Time. We know where we have been, and we know what things God has done in our lives. We don't know beyond this minute what lies ahead. Perhaps one of the greatest insights of the Jewish faith tradition is that you can see what God has done and you can know God through history. Faith also needs hope. [*Hebrews* 11:1}

Time is a very important idea in this Advent season. Two slightly different thoughts on time were evident on today's readings. From *Isaiah* we were given a glimpse of that time and those days when God's Kingdom comes. Those days we also celebrated three Sundays ago when we thought with hope about Time's goal – the coming reign of Christ.

In the second reading from *Matthew*, John the Baptist reminds us about using the time we have while we wait, hope, and expect that future. We need to reflect on "things that we have done that we ought not to have done" and the "things that we ought to have done that we have not done" to use some familiar words. And that is in some senses what Advent is about. It is a little reminder that in this time we are given we live under judgment – and most critically self-judgment. That is why we are asked regularly in worship to pause, to think. And to confess about the things that we ought not to have done. That allows us to have some sense of purpose in moving ahead into the future. That's what the gift of Advent time allows us to do. It is our God-given gift to live our entire lives in an Advent time of hope for the kingdom to come..

I would think perhaps in this church, more than many others I've ever been in, we all would be sharply aware of sacred Time because one of the glories of St. John's is its music. And music is sound made through time. Music is another way in which we as a church recognize that great gift that God has given us.

I would encourage you, and challenge you, and invite you to think about this season of Advent. And as you think about this time of anticipation moving forward, you will remember that the Christ child came to us two millennia ago. Christmas is only birthday remembrance unless our hearts become mangers of hope, peace, joy, and love for Christ's spirit. On the coming birthday of Jesus let us also anticipate that time when Christ will come again -- when the reign of Christ begins and when Time and creation finally reach their sacred goal. Amen.