

Awaiting the gift

By [Martha-Lynn Corner](#)

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Advent is a season you grow into.

As a young child, I wanted nothing to do with this “waiting” business. I spent my days aimed at the next bit of excitement, and Christmas morning was the pinnacle. But slowly, I matured, and life expanded. Time became less linear and more like a circle, each part of the church year a comforting certainty with its own unique value. The wreath itself is emblematic of this difference: a circle of greenery, with each week’s candle igniting fresh insight and reflection.

Always, at the core: Who is it we are waiting for? Who is this Emmanuel to whom we sing, in a haunting minor key?

As a parent, my life is still circular in nature, but it’s more like a crazy ball of yarn.

I depend more than ever on the rhythms of church time to slow down and refocus my intent. Now my own small children fly from excitement to excitement, stretching from babies into tiny little people with independent trajectories. It is my job, and my great pleasure, to keep Christ as a sacred space in common. Every separate strand of our lives is knit up in the One for whom we wait every year.

Who is it we are waiting for? It’s the question to which we return again and again.

And it is slowly sinking in. Advent, according to my five-year-old daughter, is the time before Jesus’ birthday when most weeks are purple, except for that one thrilling week when the candle is pink. Advent, according to my three-year-old son, smells like a pine tree. (I think that’s a great place to begin.)

There is so much to teach them. There is so much they need to know to be safe and happy. I’m still growing myself; every choice I make now weaves choices I’ve made in the past with possibilities for the future. Every choice is as much about my children’s well-being as my own—a present day born from all that has come before, yet shaped by all that will be.

And isn't that the gift we all await? Do we not welcome, in tones both hushed and jubilant, the birth of a baby boy who lived, died, and yet—inexplicably—lives anew? A birth which has happened and yet waits to occur; a blessing we depend on daily and yet still, each crystal-sharp, frigid night, wish for into the dark?

We will light the Advent wreath again at my house tonight. Its light will shine out, fresh and new, yet linked to all the nights before and all the nights yet to come. Our prayers, whispered and sung, will rise up to a God both with us and yet-to-be: God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God.

May we all be knit together in the miracle.

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