

Borderlands

It is the time of year when we all stand on the border. Walking home along a quiet pathway in the city, I am struck with the sudden absence of leaves. The trees are bare, where just days ago there was color. But upon closer look, it is clear there is a sort of chill beauty in the coming winter. Red berries stand out among leftover white tufts of seeds and dried leaves frozen in place. We are all now in the waiting phase and the slowing of time and clarity of breath is welcome.

We stand metaphorically on the border, but currently there are thousands waiting in the uncomfortable chill of the borderlands between Belarus and Poland, hoping to find a way through to warmth and safety. Germany is certainly watching what is happening there since many of those hoping for passage are naming Germany as their destination. Europe is watching since the events in these borderlands ripple across political and social spectrums. It is painful to think of those in the cold, quite literally trapped between one land and another.

Where are the borderlands around us, seen and unseen? Perhaps you live near a border. Or maybe you observe the many borders, social and cultural, that people must cross as we interact together each day. For some that is easier than others. How can we go to those borders and accompany each other across?

As Advent approaches, one of our favorite seasons here in Germany where it is celebrated with an enthusiasm for light and energy for socializing that goes well beyond shopping for gifts and decorations, we recognize the border between Jesus' absence and coming. We stand in the space between that absence and presence and know there is hope. How can we extend that tangible hope to those who are struggling with hopelessness? How do we reach across the border?

Advent is generally about hope, light, and all things that one can feel good about. But let's challenge ourselves as to how hope, warmth, welcome, community get passed to those who most need it, who are on the move. There are no easy answers here. There are borders, there are politics, there are people, there is our belief in hope. A hope that in the event of Christmas and Jesus' birth moved from something intangible to something very real. Let's work creatively to spread that real hope. Let's cross into the borderlands. Let's stand in the spaces between and join hands with those who are calling out. There is beauty in the border. Let us look that beauty in the face and call it by name.



Photo by Sinan Önder from Pexels

We leave you with a little Advent rhyme that we often hear this time of year:

Advent, Advent
ein Lichtlein brennt.
Erst ein, dann zwei,
dann drei, dann vier,
dann steht das Christkind vor der Tür.

Advent, Advent
a little light burns.
First one, then two,
then three, then four,
then stands the Christ Child at the door.

Wir wünschen euch einen schönen Advent / We wish you a lovely Advent,

Ryan and Alethia