



Dear friends,

Waiting is hard. I remember a comic hanging in the church office when I was young that said, “Lord, give me patience...and give it to me *now!*” Whether the waiting is done by children waiting for gifts, for family to arrive, or for the holidays to be finished, waiting is hard. What are you waiting for right now?

Advent is a time of waiting. Waiting for the *arrival* of one to come. The texts assigned early in Advent highlight the waiting for a second coming and as we draw closer to Christmas the texts shift to the waiting of the first coming of Christ. The early Christian community was waiting for the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecies. Many before the birth of Christ were waiting for a messiah. And after Christ, communities have continued to wait. Waiting for justice to be fulfilled. Waiting for restoration of peace and well-being. All of creation is “waiting eagerly for redemption.”

We think of those we have encountered in Berlin as they wait in the asylum process and wait through the agonizing years it takes to try and start a new life. We think of others who have been displaced by violent conflict, temporarily relocated, and are waiting to return home.

Gazans wait for an end to the current conflict, not knowing what they will return to, and all Palestinians wait for a recognized homeland. Israeli families and others wait for hostages to be released, hoping that the names of their loved ones will be on the next list.

Those who have been wrongly imprisoned are waiting to be set free. And there are those who wait for justice and the end of practices of systemic racism and discrimination.

Loved ones wait for an organ transplant or other essential medical care. And others wait for test results that may change their lives forever.

Waiting is terribly hard and often filled with moments of anxiety and stress, or moments that irreversibly change the course of life.

The Advent texts charge us to “be awake and alert,” attentive to the world around us. They charge us to see and hear those who are waiting, to be attentive to the “groans and cries” around us (and our own), and to be with one another to comfort and seek justice together.

At the United Nations Climate Change, Conference of Parties (COP 28) representatives from around the globe gathered to hear the impacts of climate change and take collective action to try and reverse the effects. Vulnerable communities worldwide have been waiting for concrete action as they watch their homes disappear. The passing of the “Loss and Damage Fund” was one step towards repair and restoration for communities who have waited so long.

You have journeyed with us over the 10 years of our time with the Presbyterian Mission Agency, listening to stories, sharing with us, praying for our family and the community in Berlin, and offering financial support. Thank you!

Waiting extends beyond the Advent season and we await with you what will come in the New Year. We hope to connect with many of you virtually and in person and we look forward to whenever that may be. Until then, we join you and all creation, waiting and seeking to be alert.

Merry Christmas!

Ryan and Alethia



Photo here and above by Felix Mittermeier courtesy of Pexels