

Advent Meditation– Nov 18, 2009 – Arlene Ruggles

“O Little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.” VU 64

When I was asked to provide a short meditation for the meeting tonight to help prepare us for the upcoming season of advent leading to Christmas, I immediately thought of this verse – and particularly the line “ hopes and fears of all the years “ – strangely, I didn’t immediately think of the second half of the sentence – “met in thee tonight”.

But if I was to take that literally, as in Now, tonight, then what about those hopes and fears we carry? Just in the last week I have been surrounded by hopes and fears, some my own, many others’, most touching my life in some way – from the despair of environmentalists hoping for greater responsibility by the world powers in Copenhagen to the hope engendered in a young family by a Habitat build of their new home to the excited joy of an expectant daughter due to give birth in February...

and you, what hopes and fears do you carry into this season?

Are you waiting for something? Are you hoping for something? Perhaps for more work...or less work...or new work. Perhaps for the results of a medical test...or surgery...or relief from pain. Perhaps you are waiting for a break...a rest...for Christmas to be over, because of what the season has held for you from the past, or what it promises to hold this year.

What about the fears? Do you fear the days getting darker and the nights longer? Is there work to be done that you fear you have little energy to tackle? Do you fear the future, and what it may hold for you , your children and grandchildren? Do you fear the experience of exile and return?

Advent is the time for asking ourselves these questions. And the time for seeking the everlasting light and warmth of God’s Love to meet the night – and our fears – with hope, with patience, with expectancy. It is not a passive time. Nor is it an easy time. Because there is life in the darkness, and there is germination in the night-time while we sleep and wait.

So tonight, tonight when you are dreaming, tonight when you walk the silent streets, open your heart and mind to the everlasting light – ask for what you need – pray for what others' need – and trust the darkness to nurture life in you. We have a trustworthy God, a God who seeks, who waits, who yearns over us, who dreams for us and with us – dreams a better world into being, with our hope and action.

Let us begin, let us come...let us advent now...safe in the strong arms of Love.
Amen.