

“Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above...” James 1:17, NRSV

Advent 2021

Aloha Holy Innocents ‘Ohana,

The message of Advent is “Keep awake!” as if we could possibly let ourselves sleep right now. This year, full of plot twists, has not given us a chance to rest. Staying vigilant has been the standard ever since the first cases of COVID-19 started making news.

We are now in the season of Advent, a subtle season. Its quietness offers us hope and patience, while the world around us it is occupied with a frenzy of shopping and planning (even while still attending to COVID-19 protocols), and the days grow shorter with cooler evenings, even here on Maui. There is a silent stirring of movement and of expectation, as the things we have planted deep, begin to take root and find the light. Those small moments, the actions and thoughts of Advent, open our hearts to see that faint light as it breaks through the chaos of our culture.

This year, we are beginning the pledge campaign later than usual. Still, every pledge campaign begins with Gratitude, and that is how I feel as I reflect on our life together, disrupted as it has been this year. I am inspired by your aloha spirit, your love for God and our neighbors, and by your generosity – by the acts of love and kindness that you have accomplished this year, and by the unseen work you have done in the service of God and our church community.

Our stewardship theme for this year is ***Gratitude: Forgiven, Restored, Strengthened***, in grateful recognition of how God has been with us and blessed us. The pledge campaign this year focuses on our gifts; not just on the things we wrap with paper and bows, and not the things we put in envelopes or give from our bank accounts, but all of the gifts that we give throughout the year. We frequently talk about the three-legged stool of *Time, Talent, and Treasure* when we talk about gifts, without really focusing on the power of each of those elements. I am grateful and aware of the ways in which you have given all three.

These are the gifts of the season: patience, hope, anticipation, and like every perfect gift, these presents bestow on us just what we need when we need it most. In a season marked by the opposing forces of starkness and extravagance, God’s generosity appeals to us in the simplicity of God’s desires for us: to be patient, to live in hope, to anticipate the freedom that will unshackle us from oppression. “And what I say to you, I say to all: Keep awake!”

What are the gifts you can give that meet the needs of the world? As we begin our pledge campaign, the Bishop’s Committee and I ask that you prayerfully consider the ways God has blessed you, and also the ways you can support the ministries of Holy Innocents Church.

Would you please complete the enclosed Stewardship Card (both sides), and return it by **December 19**, the Fourth Sunday of Advent. This will let the Bishop’s Committee plan our ministries and activities for 2022.

Please remember that your giving to Holy Innocents is confidential; and, should circumstances change, your pledge can be adjusted by you at any time.

With warmest aloha,  
Bruce+

