



Dear UJCC Family,

Another year is coming to an end, but the beginning of Advent is now upon us. Advent is rich in its call to us: to slow down, to be attentive, to prepare for the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. Even though this sounds paradoxical, when I think of Advent, I think of a bright darkness: a place of retreat and rest, a season of quiet and reflection, nourished in the dark...Kind of like a good night's sleep and the refreshment we feel after sleeping in a dark, quiet room. From this place of rest and peaceful dark, we are able to hear the messages of Advent: of hope, love, peace, and joy that Christ brings to our hearts and to the world.

I get renewed just thinking about Advent; I think it may be my favorite season of the Christian calendar. And yet, each year, I find myself lamenting how Advent gets co-opted by the busyness of Christmas and each year, I find myself guilty of being as busy and harried as the best of them.

This year, as a church, in an effort to help us experience Advent in the midst of all the Christmas festivities, I invite you to join with me in the "Advent Photo A Day" Project. Many Christian communities have participated in this the past few years. Think of it as a way of praying with a camera in your hand.

Each day has a theme assigned to it. (Please see below) Each day we take a photo of something that reminds us of this theme and we post it to our social media. Don't forget to use the hashtags (facebook: @ujccclovis and Instagram: #unitedjapanesechristianchurch) so then they're collected on our UJCC pages. It's like an art gallery and a visual way for us to pray together through this holy season. It's a way to pause in the chaos that is often December and remember the real reason of this time of year.

If taking photos and social media isn't your thing, not to worry. There are other ways to engage this spiritual practice. You are invited to journal on that word or focus on it during your daily prayer time. You might want to look through magazines and find a photo that speaks to you of the day's word.

This year, I'm committed to not let the season of Advent pass me by. I'm committed to slow down, listen, pray, and prepare myself for the sweet baby who will be born to us.

Isaiah 40:3-5 tells us, "A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'"

Advent blessings!

Akiko

UJCC's Photo-A-Day Advent Project

12/1: Hope	12/2: Fulfill	12/3: Time	12/4: Wait
12/5: Journey		12/6: Home	12/7: Fear
12/8: Love		12/9: Called	12/10: Ponder
12/11: Open		12/12: Messenger	12/13: Awake
12/14: Comfort		12/15: Joy	12/16: Promise
12/17: Prepare		12/18: Wisdom	12/19: Gather
12/20: Gladness		12/21: Faith	12/22: Peace
12/23: Light		12/24: Birth	12/25: Rejoice

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