

Knox News

DECEMBER — JANUARY

Imagination Run Wild

Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution. It is, strictly speaking, a real factor in scientific research.

-Albert Einstein, from Einstein on Cosmic Religion and Other Opinions and Aphorisms

The season of Advent invites wild imagination. Stretching from the first Sunday after Thanksgiving through Christmas Eve, Advent is a time of watching, waiting, and dreaming. The season is about more than what we know already. It is about imagining a world that is yet to come. “Advent” means “coming.”

In Advent, we read scripture passages from the prophets, who point our gaze to a day we do not yet know, at least not in full. The prophet Isaiah proclaims a day the nations “shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4). He imagines a time when “The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them” (Isaiah 11:6). The prophet Zephaniah dreams of a day God “will save the lame and gather the outcast, and change their shame into praise” (Zephaniah 3:19). Micah invites us to dream of one to come who “shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD... And the people of Israel shall live secure, for he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.” These wild imaginations were brought to life with the coming of Christ, who was God’s peace or “shalom” for the world. But we still await the fulfillment of these dreams — and the full reach of the promises they hold — on a day yet to come. So Advent reminds us of the “not yet” of our faith. And so it calls for what philosopher Jonathan Lear termed “imaginative excellence.” It calls for a hope “directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is.”

I write this Advent reflection in the wake of a presidential campaign and election that brought out fear in many a heart. Fear is a powerful human emotion, and can have profoundly practical value. It can keep us from blithely walking into traffic. It can alert us to genuine threats to our family, our communities, and our planet. It can lead us to take appropriate action to safeguard those we love. But fear can also blind us to the wonderful things God has yet to do in our midst. If we aren’t careful, it can hold back our imaginative excellence. It can stifle our prophetic dreams of peace, and of the outcast and infirm knowing radical welcome. We can lose sight of the power of God for salvation and healing in Christ. And fear can lead us to forget that God’s future is breaking in today — and that we can be a part of it.

This Advent, may God’s dream of shalom find a home in each one of us. And may we boldly imagine what God has yet to do in our midst.

Pastor Matt

Casa Mission: November 2016

John Bartholomew

A few years ago, the first Saturday in November for my wife Anne and me would have started with the raucous sound of the cockatoos in the tree out the front in Australia. The day would have ended by settling in to watch the boys in the baggy greens dominate whatever cricketers were unfortunate enough to have to tour down-under. If asked what the first Saturday in November 2016 would hold, my first answer probably would not have been this. I will be sitting in the back seat of a hired mini bus on the southern side of the US – Mexico border, eating churros, whilst being enthralled by live renditions of Johnny Cash. Never-the-less, this was where I was happy to find myself.

On November 5, 2016, I learned first-hand that this can be part of the experience of visiting Orfanato Casa de la Esperanza (House of Hope Orphanage) in Tijuana. But the day holds much more than that too.

A group from Knox makes the trip south to Casa de la Esperanza twice a year. On this occasion, we shared in music and song, craft, food, and football with the children. Apart from this Aussie (with no clue how to grill over coals) weighing down the BBQ team, it was great to see the different experiences and talents of our group come to the fore in serving the children at Casa.



For me, two other memories stand out. The first is the image of over thirty children of all ages, having just finished an energetic dance performance for us, give their absolute focus and attention to one of the founders of the orphanage as she spoke. The respect and gratitude shown in those few minutes was a powerful insight into the amazing work God is doing through the staff at Casa. The second is simply the smiles. Looking into those faces it is hard not to be thankful for life's joys, to be inspired by hope to respond to life's challenges, and to be reminded that God's love overcomes all barriers.

Parents' Morning Out

Do you need a Christmas shopping day just for mom and dad? You're invited to bring your kids to Knox for a day of fun on Saturday, **December 17** from 9:30 am-12:00 pm.

We will have a Christmas party and will also be rehearsing for the Christmas Pageant (the pageant will take place on Sunday, **December 18**). Please contact Ally Lee at knoxkids@knoxpasadena.org or 770-597-6395 to let us know if your children will attend.

Missions Giving Tree

Beginning on Advent Night, there will be a Christmas tree located in the Sanctuary narthex with ornaments listing items for donation to several of our mission partners. The mission organizations include: Neighborhood Urban Family Center, Spark of Love, Elizabeth House, and Union Station. Return unwrapped items listed on the ornament to the Narthex by Sunday, **December 18**.

Covenant Children's Homes, India

A letter from Elaini Garfield

Dear Knox Presbyterian Church,

Thank you so much for your generosity towards CCH. So many CCH children are directly affected by your support, and generations of children will feel the blessing of your gift. Right now we have 20 children in college, and next year there will be 50! We are so excited about all the transformation that is happening in the lives of our CCH children. We are grateful that you're willing to join us in this partnership!

I am Elaini Garfield, and I am a part of the new CCH Development Team, which seeks to bring awareness of CCH to the United States. My joy is to send thank you notes to CCH donors through out the year. We are excited about what God is doing in India. Thanks for joining us in this work.



Elizabeth House

Lucy Liversidge

It all started back in 1993. A local Pasadena resident donated a property to Pasadena Covenant Church as a resource to house and help at-risk women and their children in the community. Shortly thereafter, a task force concluded that there were no organizations anywhere in the San Gabriel Valley intent on assisting homeless women and children. During this period of research, the task force's chairwoman, Deborah Unruh witnessed a newborn child stripped of his mother's custody on the basis of drug use and homelessness. It was at that moment that Ms. Unruh was filled with a passion to make a difference in the local homeless female population.

These photos show two of the three women from Elizabeth House that I had the opportunity to interview as a project for my school. The photos show them along with their newborn girls. The third woman, who requested to be referred to under the pseudonym Sabrina, could not be photographed for fear she would be discovered by her abusive partner, from whom she had escaped just weeks earlier. Sabrina had found out about Elizabeth House online, and was able to find asylum there within a month of her escape. With the help of guidance counselors and similar resources available to residents of the program, Sabrina has high hopes for herself. And she is hopeful for her son's future. She is infinitely grateful for the Elizabeth House's help and the opportunities the experience with them will yield.

I give thanks to God for the ministry of Elizabeth House.



Advent at Knox

Advent Brunch: Sunday, December 11

Parents' Morning Out: Saturday, December 17

Knox Christmas Pageant: Sunday, December 18

Missions Giving Tree: now through Sunday, December 18

Christmas Eve Service: Saturday, December 24 5:00pm

Christmas Day Service: Sunday, December 25 10:00am

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