

November 03

So here we are at the edge of Advent again! The lighting of the first candle usually strikes fear in my heart. It feels like a countdown to the biggest deadline of the year. So much to do, so little time to do it. Then, on the second Sunday in this season, John the Baptist invariably shows up and shouts: ‘prepare the way!’ The perennial predicament is before me again. Advent turns up the heat on my procrastination while, in the same breath, it urges me to slow down and wait. I feel the contradiction in my bones ... hurry up and get ready; slow down and wait.

The message of the commercial Christmas is hurry up and buy; hurry up and wrap; hurry up and give; hurry up and bake; hurry up and eat; hurry up and decorate; hurry up and do everything you need to do to make Christmas merry. The invitation of the liturgical seasons of Advent and Christmas is to linger in the long night; listen through the thick of our days and nights for the voice of angels; watch the skies for new stars; travel slowly through pregnant days toward the backwaters of a Bethlehem; listen for what is coming to life in a time when so much is coming to death.

**‘We must go slowly, there is not much time’.** This is the call of Advent. It is counterintuitive. It’s the season that joins us to the long voice. Candle by candle we kindle our patience for the long work of coaxing light out of our darkness. Flame by flame our resolve is restored to persevere in building the new peace announced in Jesus of Nazareth. Spark by spark, we hope against hope for a new social arrangement. Flicker by flicker, we nurture our passion for this world which our Creator loves so much. Advent invites us in from the cold of December madness to dance a different dance ... to dance to the rhythm of waiting ... an intimate pattern of receiving, embodying, embracing the holy who waits to be born in us, between us and among us. May we dare to sit out the frantic dance of making Christmas and choose the purposeful advent dance of the Divine. God waits to waltz with us. Blessed be our Advent dance!