

MISSIONAL INITIATIVES

Monthly Newsletter

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Waiting as a Formational Process

Deb Judas: Director of Formation

“Advent! A holy season in which we connect again with our ‘inconsolable longing,’ as C. S. Lewis called it our yearning for the One who is to come and is also, mysteriously, the One who has come already – come as a child, come as a fellow-sufferer, come as Saviour, and yet whose coming already achieved, we hold at bay from ourselves, so that we have to learn afresh each year, even each day, how to let Him come to us again.”

Malcolm Guite (Inconsolable Longing: Advent in Music and Poetry)

Advent means “to come.” Each year, we set aside this season to wait for our celebration of the coming Messiah. We attach all sorts of descriptive words to Advent such as anticipation, expectation and longing, but what we are doing... is waiting.

People don’t usually like to wait. It can be monotonous, tedious and even unbearable. It doesn’t seem to matter what we are waiting for – good or bad – it is difficult and almost always a test of patience. However, the Advent season provides an opportunity to be formed into the image of Christ. Like it or not, there are gifts and discoveries that can only be found in the waiting.

The question then becomes, how do we wait?

This Advent season is not passive. It is an active waiting. We must become attentive to the season, mindfully preparing ourselves in anticipation of the coming Christmas celebration. We must also remind ourselves, and those we lead, that in the midst of our many traditions, feasts and gatherings throughout the season, we are still waiting for Christ’s return, when he ushers in his full reign over the new heaven and earth.

So now our waiting becomes purposeful. We still long for a better day, but this waiting is full of opportunity. It is a time where we seek first God’s Kingdom, discovering where and how he

wants us to join him in his work here and now. We must be present to the moment. If we keep our gaze on the things of the past or try to anticipate the events of the future, we miss our most important time which is right now.

How then, shall we wait and make the most of this “now and not yet” time as we live in between Christ’s first and second coming?

Advent is a gift that allows us to practice active waiting. As we enter into the incarnational Story, it becomes a formative time. All the metaphors and symbolism of the season help to centre our attention on preparing ourselves for the coming King. We must use this time wisely.

Let’s attend deeply to the season, discovering not only the rich tradition of Advent, but more importantly, encountering Jesus himself. May this waiting shape us into the image of Christ, letting him come to us again, each and every day. May our new insights and deepening relationship with Jesus be the catalyst that sends us out to bear witness in the world through love, compassion, kindness, generosity, and hope.



How to Raze a Little Hell!

Merv Budd: Equipping Evangelist

razed; razing

transitive verb: to destroy to the ground: DEMOLISH

If the Kingdom of God exists where the King is present reigning, then it may be possible to understand that hell exists where Satan rules. Part of the roll of the people of God, according to Paul, is that “...though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:3–5).

Sometimes the strong wording of Paul’s exhortation gives the impression that we need to be aggressive and forceful in our approach. But that kind of approach would actually be to contradict the verse and use the weapons of this world. I often find that much of my evangelistic engagement is trying to “demolish” the mental roadblocks that keep people from experiencing the goodness of the King. Helping people to change the narrative that they have been living by, and telling themselves.

This past fall, I was with a lady who told me she was mad at God. We had had several conversations in the past, she knew what I did for a living, and we were comfortable with each other. "Why?" I inquired. "God took my mom with cancer." I paused, expressed my sympathy, and then took a risk. "It sounds like death and disease took your mom. You should be angry at death." "What's the difference?" she asked. I then was able to tell her how death is the enemy of God, and that God is going to defeat death. She soon found herself more appreciative of God instead of hating him. The narrative she had assumed had been changed. God is the one who will defeat that which took her mom.

There are lots of stories that people have told themselves about God that allow them to dismiss His goodness and keep them from receiving His love. In short people are deceived by Satan and are experiencing a little of Hell of earth. Sometimes evangelism involves razing a little hell and exalting the God who loves them.



A Non-Anxious Presence – Mark Sayers

Cam Roxburgh: Team Lead

Many of you will be familiar with the work of Mark Sayers. Mark is a friend of Forge, having been loosely affiliated with Forge in the early days as he attended the church pastored by Alan Hirsch in Melbourne. The Holy Spirit has both gifted Mark with a keen mind as it relates to the Gospel, Church, and culture and made Mark a gift to the church as a whole. His many books in recent years have been a gift to the way we are discerning God's presence in our midst.

His most recent book, *A Non-Anxious Presence*, is of particular value in these days. As we see so many signs of an "unraveling" in the way the world has been working, we know the inner tensions that have been growing in leaders in the church all over the world. In this excellent book, Mark highlights the story that the world has told for the past 75 years and how we as the church were co-opted into it. He encourages us to be a non-anxious presence in the midst of this unraveling and to trust in the story of God (Gospel) that shapes who we are as God's people. He builds on the work of Edwin Friedman in *Failure of Nerve* to show how we have the possibility of demonstrating that there is a different story in the midst of the crisis that so many are feeling.

In a day and age where we are seeing "The Great Resignation," (more pastors resigning than ever before) and we are witnessing so many Christians turning away from the institutional church, this book is a wonderful gift to explain why all this is happening and to give us some hope as to how we may indeed bear witness to God in the midst of it. There is a great opportunity in our midst.