



A Note from the Pastor's Corner

Here it is again. The season known as Advent is upon us again. The word 'advent' means arrival or coming, especially when it's something very important or much anticipated. Most people would say that advent is a synonym for Christmas – which it is not. But, if that's what is in people's minds when they hear the word, then I guess that's what it really does mean – which also is an indication of what's in their hearts.

In the past, I've written about organizations like Heifer that help supply people with a cow, a pig, a goat or two, some chickens or ducks, or whatever their resources can support. They also give them training on how to raise and care for the animal and how to nurture that animal so it can produce income as well as producing sustenance. One suggestion was to contribute towards the purchase of a goat for example and have a 'Thank You' card sent to one of your adult children – and that would be their gift.

I don't know how many had taken this type of suggestion to heart. There have been others, like to spend less. My guess is that people may have thought about it, but decided that might be a good idea some year down the road.

Well, given our nation's current state of affairs, this year is probably that 'some year down the road' that you had put having a more sensible Christmas off to. Really, now, there's no sense in suggesting that we don't participate with the rest of our society in the cultural celebration. But we can be more moderate.

One suggestion I've heard was to buy local goods or services. A gallon of locally produced maple syrup, a ticket to visit the MOST (Museum of Science and Technology) in Syracuse, a block of cheese from the Colosse cheese store in Pulaski, a gift certificate to a local (meaning non-chain) restaurant or for a round of golf at a local golf course. This kind of gift is good for the local economy and the local business person.

And I do have one more suggestion that you can do with as you wish. Most of us know someone who is struggling right now. Wouldn't it be a great gift to stuff some cash into a small package and mail it to them? And before you plan to tell me that it's 'not safe' to send cash through the mail – I didn't just fall off the turnip truck – do it anyway. Only don't include any identifying information – like no signed card and no return address. If it's in a small package and the Post Office wants it to have a return address, put the church's address on it. If the recipient calls and asks what it's all about, I can honestly play dumb.

In the past, when I've made this suggestion (this the first time in the Witness), I actually had a few people say they would feel as if it just wasn't a Christmas present if they didn't get to see the surprise and look of gratitude on the recipient's face. Honest – I kid you not. But, I didn't press the issue. My impression is that they needed that personal acknowledgement – and credit – for giving such a gift. One person's response in particular stands out in my mind: "Unless I know that a person I've given a gift to truly appreciates that gift, then *my* Christmas wouldn't be enjoyable. I'd always have that question in my mind. I like the idea – I just don't like the method."

Ah, yes. The method is the problem. There are several ways I could respond to that here – but I'll leave that to you to mull around. I'll just say that if anyone reading this feels the same way, please do not tell me.

Meanwhile, if this is something you plan to do but are running short on names of people who are struggling in our community, please contact me and I'd be glad to help you. And I can almost guarantee there will be more thankfulness than you realize.

Grace and peace, Pastor Bud