

Advent



Liturgy Canada

What Hope for Advent?

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With this issue, we dare to acknowledge the elephant-in-the-room that will confront us when we begin the season of Advent. By that point it will be too late to prepare for Christmas, since Christmas will already be upon us — in the media, in the malls, and probably in church, too. It's not just the fact that the Christian calendar is 'out of sync' with the calendar of our culture. We need to ask what is the hope that our ecclesiastical celebration on December 25 could possibly contribute to the meaning of a festival whose popular celebration is so much more powerful, and is already over. We might even ask what point there is to a discussion of this issue if most congregations have already more or less adopted the cultural calendar anyway, with Christmas pageants, Christmas carols, and Christmas parties.

Nevertheless, our lead article by Murray Porter boldly proposes a 'fix' for this dilemma. He suggests that we move Advent back and build our celebration upon the Christmas that people actually experience.

Peter Wall responds with a warning about the peril of tampering with a shared catholic and ecumenical symbol.

William Petersen reports on an ongoing project similar to Porter's proposal that is actually grounded in the new lectionary.

Lisa Newland recounts the recent attempts in the Church of England to 'fix' the calendar, and offers a warning about tampering with the Tradition for

ill-considered theological reasons.

There is, of course, a much larger context to this discussion. The church we love is now in the midst of what is probably the biggest crisis since the 16th century Reformation. Our ecclesiastical culture is largely the corpse of a Christendom that has not yet been buried. Shall we pretend that it is not so and make whatever compromises are necessary to rebuild our numbers, or shall we heed Jesus' mandate to make disciples so that the church can become the sign of an alternative future for a world held in thrall to consumerism?

It may come as a surprise to faithful Anglicans and Lutherans to learn that our new lectionary has already made the basic shift to an earlier Advent. Not only does John-the-Baptist's summons to repent come a week earlier than it did in the lectionary we inherited from the middle ages, freeing up the Sunday before Christmas for the story of the Annunciation; the Gospel readings for the Sundays of November (including the first Sunday of Advent) immerse us in the story of Jesus' last days in Jerusalem, with their apocalyptic warnings. In other words, we have already started revising Advent! The question is, what else can we do to strengthen this period of preparation to respond to the tsunami of our sentimentalized and commercialized Christmas? Liturgy Canada welcomes your input.

John Hill

I propose some calendar revision that may allow us to enjoy Advent in the mentality of its more recent symbolic royal blue...

Moving Advent

Murray Porter

One of the good things about Thanksgiving is that our whole society – Christian, other faiths and seculars alike – are observing the same thing at the same time. It's a whole community celebration.

December is a different story. We Christians who claim to order our worship according to the church calendar do not observe fully the rich material of Advent, except maybe the wreath rituals and ceremonies, which more properly belong at home rather than in Church, at the family dinner table, all during December. Probably the best we can manage is only the four Sunday evenings of Advent in this individualistic and frenetic society.

It is a shame that we only pay lip service to Advent, but, with a rather short Christmas season, with the New Year in the middle of it, we rob what opportunity there is to preach the spiritual significance of this Holy Nativity, i.e. the theological meaning of the entrance of God the Word and God the Holy Spirit into finite and material life and to expound the sacramental reality of the Spirit and Word of God in the material reality.

I am sure most of us have noticed how many people, including the clergy of the liturgical churches of the west, jump the gun and have Christmas events and even complete Christmas liturgies during Advent, not to mention Santa parties in Church School. Thus, it becomes redundant to have special liturgies and other kinds of seasonal and social celebrations during the wonderful Twelve Days of the Christmas season.

I propose some calendar revision that may allow us to enjoy Advent in the mentality of its more recent symbolic royal blue instead of the old penitential purple, making Advent feel like a mini Lent. One of the enjoyable events we can do is Advent Lessons and Carols, to inspire and enlighten one Sunday evening, together with the fun of a pot luck supper, probably preceding it.

I also propose lengthening the Christmas season so that Christians can enjoy some of it at the same time as other people, thus making Christmas feel a bit more like a whole community celebration.

By adding Sundays immediately before Christmas Eve and Day, we can have time for in-depth incarnational preaching and teaching and time to celebrate with material that will help us to prepare spiritually for the observance of the Holy Nativity. It is a more positive way of preparing for and anticipating the Christmas celebration that is less guilt inducing because of robbing Advent.

I suggest the Sunday Calendar might look like this:

- begin Advent one week earlier than at present (move The Reign of Christ a Sunday earlier, too)
- reduce Advent Sundays to three and insert two Sundays of the Incarnation before Christmas Day."

What I am proposing could do these things for Anglican Christians:

- Omit the lesser Sundays immediately preceding Advent;
- Give time to observe fully and tidily Advent with less distraction and resentment;
- Add time to the Christmas season for theological reflection on the meaning of the Birth of Jesus in music, drama and sermon that is more in tune with the rest of the world;
- Give time for fuller observance and enjoyment of the whole Christmas season that grows out of the great birth of God into creation and runs to the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

The Rev'd Canon Murray Porter was an Ontario Public Service Chaplain for 25 years, parish priest in the Algoma Diocese for 10 years and now retired is Honorary Assistant at St Mark's Anglican Church in Midland, Ontario.

Keeping Advent

Peter Wall

I find Mr. Porter's argument both intriguing and provocative. However, I do not believe that lengthening Advent would accomplish that for which he hopes. The Christian calendar is both important and instructive for us all and, indeed, is one of the ways in which we live out the *catholicity* of the Church. For that reason alone, I would reject a unilateral re-defining of the length of Advent.

We all know that Advent presents some particular challenges to the worship planner and to the preacher. There are the challenges of keeping a short and serious season in the midst of the commercial hype of the world around us. There are the challenges of bringing the Word (usually during Advent a word of warning, of consequence, of end-times) to a culture in which the 'feel good' euphoria of Christmas is constantly assailing them from almost every direction. There are the challenges, ultimately, of *making* and *keeping* Advent, and **then**, *making* and *keeping* Christmas. It is not easy and one often wishes that either the calendar **or** the world were different.

The church has always struggled to slow down the world around it during the four weeks of Advent. One of my arguments against lengthening Advent is the advantage of its relative brevity. Four weeks is a digestible chunk of time, even when competing with all of the associated *energy* of pre-Christmas. It is a good length in which to preach and teach about the coming of the Kingdom. The lectionary readings, beginning late in the Pentecost season, looking forward to Advent, draw us into texts which speak about end time, about the coming Kingdom, about the transformation which awaits us all. Using carefully these texts and the themes they suggest *does* enable us to pre-figure Advent in our teaching, preaching, and liturgical planning. The difficulties of holding back the culture from completely taking

over Advent is difficult but is, I believe, good work; and the diligent application of principles which say that we will keep Advent and not Christmas, until it actually arrives, is a good discipline for us all, even though very difficult and at times enormously frustrating. Preventing Christmas carols and Santa Claus from creeping into Advent is a huge challenge, one to which I think we need to commit ourselves.

The flip side, of course, is to *keep* Christmas in appropriate and helpful ways. If The Feast of the Nativity (December 25) is the actual celebration of the birth of Jesus, we also know that the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6), what I call the *second* incarnation feast, marks the revelation of Jesus as the Light of the World, to the gentiles and to the world, **and** that the Feast of the Presentation (February 2), what I call the *third* incarnation feast, marks the revelation of Jesus as Messiah to the people of Israel. So it seems to me that the challenge before us is not to change Advent, but rather to celebrate Christmas! Let's put the pageants (I know – this is a huge sacred cow!) into the Christmas season; let's try to have our Carol Services in the Epiphany season. Let's sing our carols and beautiful Christmas music right through the month of January, rather than letting ourselves be so conformed to the world around us that we, too, let Christmas slip out of our grasp by about December 28!

I deeply appreciate Mr. Porter's passion on this matter; I believe that he is right when he says that we need to re-focus ourselves on the importance of these seasons. I think that we can do this without trying to make Advent longer or earlier. I think that we can do it by re-focusing ourselves on both Advent and Christmas.

Peter Wall is Dean of Christ's Church Cathedral (Anglican) for the Diocese of Niagara, Co-Chair of the Joint Anglican-Lutheran Commission, and member of the Executive of Liturgy Canada.

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Anticipated Returns: The Advent Project

William H. Petersen

The Situation: Advent Eclipsed

The title "Anticipated Returns" juxtaposed with the term "Advent" might at first glance suggest an article dealing with hope for the remedy of an ailing economy. And this would be true, except for the fact that this article concerns the economy of salvation more than the monetary and fiscal health of our society. There is, however, some relation between the two, though not a happy one.

The churches long ago lost the Advent season to the Christmas culture. The home or yard decorations lurking in the back corners of retail and supermarket establishments from late August, join with the surreptitiously expanding shelves of pharmacies loaded with Christmas items, just waiting for Hallowe'en to pass so that they can explode into their full manifestation on November 1st. Conjoin to all this the unrelenting barrage of television and other electronic media advertisements for the holiday season and the *parousia* is complete.

Against all this the Church has little defense. By the time Advent begins, the pressure to sing Christmas hymns, even from our own parishioners, is overwhelming. Many congregations simply sell out and hold such services as "Lessons and Carols" as early, if church bulletins I receive in the mail speak true, as Advent I. Thus, by the beginning of December we are well on our way to Bethlehem. For all intents and purposes, then, our culture, the culture of Christmas has effectively eclipsed the season of Advent and precluded any engagement of its primary focus.

The Proposal: An Expanded Advent

But what is the primary focus of Advent? If it is only the Nativity or preparation for it, then something vital is missing. We say that the season is the beginning of the liturgical year. The original intent of

the season was to begin by looking to the end. The wisdom of the poet T.S. Eliot captures some of the sense of this intent in the line, "In my beginning is my end."¹ To apply that wisdom to the present matter is to recognize that we best, at the start of a new year in time, look to the end, to the goal, to the eternal moment that makes sense of all our moments. And, for Christians, this means a focus first on the full manifestation, the *parousia*, of all that is implied in and by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Here, then, the season at the beginning of the church year puts before us every year the great eschatological themes of the Gospel. The kingdom parables of summer and autumnal Pentecost follow Jesus around the countryside, but in the Revised Common Lectionary there is a change in the atmosphere by the beginning of November. The kingdom parables now take on a harvest-time or in-gathering and fulfillment character. And they are supported in this climate change by prophetic and apostolic readings as well. Our focus in all this is set on the goal so that in our annual cycle of the liturgical year we may have clearly before us the purpose toward which it tends and which makes our annual pilgrimage an occasion always for deeper appropriation rather than simply a cyclic routine.

All of this argues, it seems to me, for the Church at the beginning of its annual pilgrimage to put itself in mind of such a goal and to be energized and engraed by that attention. We need, in other words, not just to rant or wring our hands in the face of the situation, but to reclaim the season of Advent from the consumer Christmas culture. One way of doing this would be to expand the season to its original length. The Orthodox tradition,

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indeed, has never lost the observance of a seven-week Advent. In the west, long before the reformations of the 16th century, the season was truncated to four weeks and remained so as the several post-reformational traditions crystalized the calendar. In a society that did not have to deal with the Christmas culture, the four weeks were, perhaps, adequate, but our times call for a restoration of a longer season.

There is another reason, too — and one internal to Christianity — for making the proposal of an expanded Advent. We are faced in our day with what I would call distorted eschatologies that are labeled variously as fundamentalist, millennialist, or rapturist. These would lead us not only into an escape from the world, but rob us as well from our responsibilities as agents-in-Christ of God's reign. In a recent book, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (Westview Press, 2004), Barbara R. Rossing, a Lutheran theologian, sets before us a more authentic eschatology. With her we need to hear again, and perhaps with the intensity best realized when it is set to the glorious music of Handel's *Messiah*, that great text from Revelation, "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever, Hallelujah!"

Yet one book, however excellent, cannot bear the freight of the challenge. An expanded Advent season might give us a chance to reclaim from the Christmas culture some time for an observance and appropriation of the season's primary focus. We might then know why, in its final weeks, we begin to turn our attention to Bethlehem. Another "anticipated return" of this proposal would be the Advent opportunity week-by-week, year-by-year to address in sermon, song, and celebration the hearts and minds and wills of Christians with an eschatology free from misreadings, misinterpretations, and

misappropriations; an eschatology that sets forth the redeeming justice of God's reign and calls us to be agents of it; an eschatology that proclaims a kingdom characterized by the reconciling peace of Christ; and, finally, an eschatology that envisions a domain that finds its proper venue in and through the integrity of the Spirit's creation.

A Vehicle: The NAAL Advent Project Seminar

In January 2006 I proposed to the North American Academy of Liturgy that the executive board of the academy establish a new continuing seminar to be called "The Advent Project Seminar." They acted positively and the seminar was duly established. It has met three times at subsequent annual meetings of NAAL in 2007 (Toronto), 2008 (Savannah) and 2009 (Baltimore). We look forward to the fourth meeting of the seminar in Milwaukee in January 2010.

The purposes of the Advent Project Seminar are three-fold: (1) To work ecumenically for the expansion of the season from four to seven weeks; (2) to collect & collate and/or to produce and provide appropriate Advent worship and homiletical resources for clergy, church musicians, and congregations; and (3) to author as well as solicit scholarship that will support and interpret this proposal for liturgical renewal.

The work that has gone forward to date has concerned all these goals. An expanded Advent season was established on an experimental basis in the seminary community in Columbus, Ohio, last fall with very positive results. The next step is to add parish experience to the base of data being collected through a questionnaire. The seminar itself has heard papers and presentations on subjects that address the homiletical and musical resources already available for a longer season. The seminar has also commissioned some new work (e.g., antiphons for

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psalms whether at the Eucharist or Daily Office). We have also been listening to liturgical and ecumenical officers from various traditions concerning what approaches within their respective polities would result in consideration of the envisioned calendar reform.

The seminar can thus serve as a clearing house for relevant materials and as a kind of action committee for advancing the proposal. In the near future we hope to establish a dedicated website that will facilitate communication and the collation of trial usage in various venues from seminaries to parishes.

Present Development: The Shape and Feel of an Expanded Advent

It has already been noted that no revision of the Revised Common Lectionary would be necessary to this proposal. Also, there is the advantage ecumenically in the fact that Orthodoxy already features a seven week Advent. The earliest date upon which the first Sunday in Advent could occur would be November 6. The latest date for its start would be November 12. In 2009, for instance, Advent would begin on Sunday, November 8. The general pattern is this:

- Advent I the Sunday falling on or between 06 - 12 November
- Advent II 13 - 19 November
- Advent II 20 - 26 November
- Advent IV 27 November – 03 December
- Advent V 04 - 10 December
- Advent VI 11 - 17 December
- Advent VII 18 - 24 December

Furthermore, the scriptural titles given to Jesus as the Christ by the Great “O” Antiphons for the Magnificat (Song of Mary, Luke 1: 46 - 55) in the evening Daily Office, 17 - 24 December, might well be adapted to serve as the Sunday-by-Sunday themes (antiphons to the gradual psalm, anthem texts, &c.) for the

season. Most people are, of course, familiar with these antiphons (whether they consciously know it or not) as the verses of the hymn *Veni, Emmanuel* (“O come, O come, Emmanuel” (ELW, 257 or CP, 89). Using these titles in this way would continue to honor the now-established principle of liturgical renewal that every Sunday in the church year is principally a feast of Christ. In addition, the traditional order of the “O” antiphons could be slightly altered to put *Rex Gentium* appropriately on the new Advent III, thus avoiding any displacement for traditions observing Christ the King Sunday. In this schema, then, the Sundays of Advent would thematically become:

- Advent I *O Sapientia*
Wisdom
“wisdom from on high”
- Advent II *O Adonai*
Lord
“Lord of might”
- Advent III *O Rex gentium*
Ruler of nations
“desire of nations”
- Advent IV *O radix Jesse*
Root of Jesse
“branch of Jesse’s tree”
- Advent V *O clavis David*
Key of David
“key of David”
- Advent VI *O Oriens*
Morning Star
“dayspring from on high”
- Advent VII *O Emmanuel*
God with us
“Emmanuel”

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Recapitulation and Request

In a counter-cultural move, this arrangement puts the beginning of the Christian year where it ought to be, namely, looking at the end or goal with the already established eschatological themes of the three-year lectionary. The season would then move gradually from the initial eschatological pole toward the incarnational one that begins the recapitulation of the life and ministry of Jesus with the Nativity.

The Advent Project Seminar welcomes any and all reflection on the proposal. Furthermore, if your community, parish or seminary, would be interested in an experimental trial use of an expanded Advent season along the lines of the proposed rubrics, please be in touch by e-mail with whpetersen@aol.com. So, then, “for the time being” (to steal a line from W. H. Auden), *Maranatha!*

¹ T.S. Eliot, “East Coker,” *Four Quartets: Centenary Edition*, NY: HJB, 1971, p. 23.

The Very Rev'd William H. Petersen recently retired as Provost and Professor of Ecclesiastical & Ecumenical History at Bexley Hall Seminary where he also taught liturgics. Bexley Hall is an accredited seminary of the Episcopal Church in partnership with Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio. Fr Petersen is the founder and convener of The Advent Project Seminar in the North American Academy of Liturgy and holds membership in both the International Anglican Liturgical Conference and Societas Liturgica.

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Advent in the Church of England

Lisa Newland

One of the significant changes that came out of this revision process were certain alterations made to the Church calendar, specifically the addition of a seventh season to the Church year that immediately precedes Advent.

Liturgical revision and development has been an ongoing process through the centuries. The twentieth century was, of course, no exception to this. Such changes to the liturgy arose from the Church's discerned need to offer liturgies that reflected the latest historical scholarship while simultaneously meeting the pastoral needs of the day. While countless revisions have taken place in response to these needs, of particular interest is the more recent attempt by the Church of England to revise the Church year. This article will provide a brief account of this attempt as well as a theological critique of it, including the impact these revisions have had on the season of Advent.

After many years of trying to revise *The Book of Common Prayer*, efforts came to an end in 1928 when the proposals were rejected by the British Parliament. Eventually, most of the 1928 Prayer Book services were authorized for use in public worship in 1966, with some amendments, as the First Series of Alternative Services. Following this, a time of experimentation with additional Alternative Services (Series Two and Three) began in the mid-1960s. This resulted in the publication of *The Alternative Service Book 1980*. In 2000, twenty years after its first publication, the ASB was replaced by a new generation of services entitled *Common Worship*. This most recent liturgical revision attempted to harmonize modern liturgy with the tradition of worship from *The Book of Common Prayer*.

One of the significant changes that came out of this revision process were certain alterations made to the Church calendar, specifically the addition of a seventh season to the Church year that immediately precedes Advent. Initially called the "Kingdom Season" (*Celebrating Common Prayer*, Mowbray, 1992), and later renamed "All Saints to Advent", this

newly created season is designed to bring together the many themes present during the month of November – All Saints, the departed, Remembrance and the Kingship of Christ. By gathering together these four 'Sundays before Advent' to form the seventh season of "All Saints to Advent", those involved with this revision believe it draws the Church year to a close by celebrating both the reality of God's rule and the final ingathering into His kingdom.

As one would imagine, there are voices both in support of and in opposition to this change to the Church year. Those in favour of the creation of the "All Saints to Advent" season claim that it deals with the need for a strong Christian awareness of the truth of God's reign and the future hope of being received into His kingdom. Such beliefs help to counter the powerful influence of secular culture at that time of the year, especially concerning celebrations around Hallowe'en. Further to this point, supporters maintain that ending not just this season, but also the Church year with the Feast of Christ the King provides even more emphasis on the truth of God's reign by celebrating the universal sovereignty of Christ, revealing him to be both Lord of earth and heaven and judge of all. Lastly, advocates state that this final judgement that is part of Christ's kingship creates a natural link to the season of Advent with its themes of preparation for the coming of Jesus at Christmas time and for his final second coming, beginning the cycle of the Church year once again.

Those opposed to the creation of this seventh season take issue with these points, mainly because they believe such points rest on faulty theological premises. One of the more vocal opponents concerning this revision is N.T. Wright, Bishop of Durham and well known theologian and author. Wright

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offers his own theological critique of the “All Saints to Advent” season in his book, *For All the Saints? Remembering the Christian Departed*.¹ Chief among his criticisms is this new season’s return to an understanding of ‘kingdom’ that New Testament scholars have long since abandoned. According to Wright, the content of the “All Saints to Advent” season leaves one with the impression that God is in charge of a ‘kingdom’ that is located in heaven and not on earth, and that only some of the Christian dead (i.e. the saints) have arrived – a clear misuse of the word ‘kingdom’. As such, little room is left for the final resurrection and the promised coming of the new heaven and the new earth.

Much more could be said about this. However, of particular interest is the inadvertent affect this has had on the season that follows – Advent. For Wright, this flawed eschatology has greatly undermined Advent because it changes how the Christian story ends. By revising the Church calendar to include the season of “All Saint to Advent”, the hope Christians have for the future celebrated during Advent is called into question. It is Wright’s belief that having ‘Sundays before Advent’ consisting of All Saints, All Souls’, Remembrance Sunday and the Feast of Christ the King, the eschatological teaching of the old church year which taught that the coming of God’s kingdom on earth as in heaven is foreshadowed in the coming of God’s incarnate Son, has been replaced by a very different eschatology which seems to teach that, “the saints’ have gone before us into a ‘kingdom’ called ‘heaven’ where we hope to eventually join them.”

In addition to questioning the presence of Christ’s kingdom from Ascension onwards and implying that Christ may only be king of heaven and not of earth as well, the season of “All Saints to

Advent” calls into question the earliest Christian confession that Jesus is Lord already and that its not something one has to wait for until the end of time by suggesting that he does not yet reign but hopefully will at some point in the distant future. As a result, this latter point in particular belittles the hope that is set before God’s people in the season of Advent.

As seen from this one example of liturgical revision in the Church of England, any innovations made, in this case regarding the Church calendar, are seldom straightforward and fully agreed upon. While both supporters and opponents of various revisions share the same desire to offer liturgies that reflect the latest historical scholarship while simultaneously meeting the pastoral needs of the day, the similarities usually end there. And that’s not a bad thing. Having a balance of voices that can challenge and critique the other is important if one hopes to arrive at a revision that is faithful to the Christian story and ultimately leads to the building up of God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

¹ N.T. Wright, *For All the Saints? Remembering the Christian Departed* (Morehouse Publishing, 2003), 62.

The Rev’d Lisa Newland is the Incumbent at St. Matthew’s Anglican Church in Oshawa, Ontario.

...this flawed eschatology has greatly undermined Advent because it changes how the Christian story ends.

Ideas for Community and Family Ritual and Celebration

Elizabeth Nelson



Creating sacred space, sacred time and sacred symbols and utilizing those to mark important transitions are ways we can be conscious of special moments. The seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany are ones that are rich with celebratory moments. Here are a few ideas to spur you on!

- Advent Wreath—a great activity for the Saturday before Advent begins!
- Crèche—A crèche can be made of any material—be creative! My parish church has a display the last 2 Sundays of Advent of manger scenes. My personal favourite is an unpainted wooden crèche with carved figures. When my boys were little, we would put it out and discover Lego and Playmobil figures joining around the manger. The wise men (just 2!) made their way to the living room from the guest room starting on December 26th to arrive on January 6th.
- Advent calendar helps us count days: we are awaiting a Saviour
- Las Posadas—have the nativity figures from the parish crèche travel from home to home for a day and be brought to the church on Christmas Eve
- Jesse Tree—Decorated with symbols of stories from both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, this also can be a wonderful parish activity replacing a “Christmas tree”. One year, we had outreach activity suggestions hanging from the Jesse Tree and everyone was invited to take one.
- December 6—St Nicholas Day can bring some fun into the long days of Advent. My boys would leave their slippers outside their bedroom doors and be surprised in the morning with a very small toy or book. After school, they would make St Nicholas cookies with their dad using a “speculatus” or gingerbread dough. You could use a cardboard pattern of a bishop with a mitre for the basic shape and then decorate. One year, a retired bishop came to our parish celebration, dressed up in full regalia and explained the role of a bishop. We told some of the stories associated with St Nicholas and then assembled baskets for distribution at a local shelter.
- December 13—Santa Lucia Day—Traditionally, the eldest daughter wears a crown of candles and brings the family breakfast in bed. A friend made herself a crown with battery operated candles, wore her wedding dress and prepared a special breakfast for her husband and two boys.
- December 26—St Stephen—Send a Christmas offering to a special charity—or go to help!
- December 27—St John—Raise a toast to family and friends. A traditional one is “Where there is love, there is God.”
- Epiphany—To mark the revelation of the Christ Child as Saviour of all the world, we welcome the Magi who have travelled from far-off lands. Many parts of Europe still have a blessing of homes on this day. A special meal is in order. And for dessert, a cake with a dried lima bean (or two or three depending upon the size of your celebration!). Whoever gets the bean is crowned “king”. I have been part of an interdenominational Epiphany party where we began with a type of Parchesi game (“You have seen the star, advance 10 paces.” “You are trapped in a sandstorm, stay put one turn.”). We shared in the “bean cake” and then followed, singing, the kings in procession to a bonfire made from the Christmas tree. Then the Matthew passage of the wise men was read before we celebrated with hot chocolate. Another Epiphany tale is the story of “Befana”.

Elizabeth Nelson is a deacon at the Church of St Augustine in Toronto and is the mother of 2 ‘adult boys’. Gertrud Mueller Nelson’s book “To Dance to God” is one of her favourites.

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Website Highlights

www.stnicholascenter.org
www.adventconspiracy.org

www.stnicholascenter.org

The St. Nicholas Centre is a virtual centre, a website, where people can learn about St. Nicholas; it provides resources for families, churches, and schools.

www.adventconspiracy.org

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The story of Christ's birth is a story of promise, hope, and a revolutionary love. But what was once a time to celebrate the birth of a saviour has somehow turned into a season of stress, traffic jams, and shopping lists. And when it's all over, many of us are left with presents to return, looming debt that will take months to pay off, and this empty feeling of missed purpose. Is this what we really want out of Christmas? What if Christmas became a world-changing event again?

Welcome to Advent Conspiracy.

Is there a website you think others should know about? Email Liturgy Canada at litcan@liturgy.ca



Liturgy Canada ISSN: 1493-6529
 Advent 2009 Issue 48, Volume XII, #4

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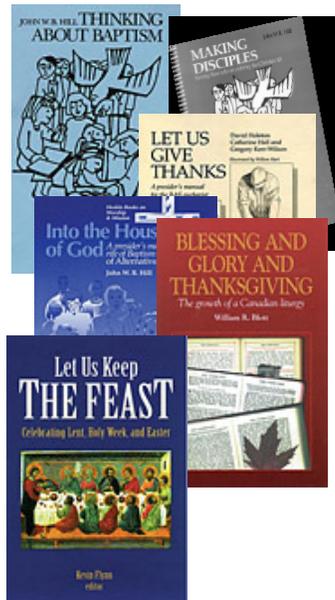
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