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# Advent Is More Than Just a Holiday Tradition

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Advent is a special time of year for many believers.

It's a time when people who believe in Jesus Christ as the savior of the world take time to remember the weeks leading up to Christmas, where we traditionally celebrate his birth in a humble manger, thousands of years ago.

But for most of my upbringing, I didn't know that Advent existed. Well, not in a way that would lead me to celebrate the religious meaning behind it in the same way that I celebrated Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

I came from an Evangelical Christian background that didn't put as much emphasis on the Advent season as it did on the celebrated day of Christ's birth. When I was growing up, Christmas Eve was the holiday that we would gather at the church to sing praises to Christ, listen to a choir Christmas play or children's play, and probably enjoy a fellowship time with delicious cakes and snacks afterward.

Advent was a word that I would hear and see in popular culture, but not something I actively participated in. Lots of people outside of the church probably see Advent as an excuse to buy those fun calendars with different snacks or drinks experiences for each day prior to Christmas; or, in the case of my house, a different dog snack for your two furry, four-legged children.

That's probably how I understood Advent, too. Not a religious experience but a cultural one.

Now, with more than two years of work for the Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church behind my belt, I've come to love and appreciate the Advent season.

According to Resource UMC, Advent, which in Latin means "coming" or "arrival," actually started out as an alternative preparation time leading up to a new believer's baptism ceremony. Over the years, the celebration of Advent became more and more associated with Christmas and the four weeks prior to the arrival of Christ, which is how we celebrate its meaning in modern times.

Advent is a time of preparation and anticipation for the coming of Christ, and remembrance of the longing of the ancient Jews for a Messiah. We remember our own need for forgiveness, salvation and a new beginning during Advent.

This is what I love the most about Advent. It's not just a celebration of a day or two of the coming of Christ; it's a month-long affair.

And why shouldn't it be that long? We are talking about the savior of the world who brought to us the ultimate payment for our sins. I think that deserves more than just a passing thought.

So now, Christmas has taken on a whole new purpose in my life. Advent has helped me to reflect on the blessings I have, and the hope I have for a new beginning in the new year. After the way that 2020 has gone, I think we all need some hope to hold on to.

Although Advent looks quite different this season, I hope that you find ways to safely celebrate with your friends, family, and church community during this holy time of the year.

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