

The Rev. Laura Strauss '09
Pastor, Clinton United Presbyterian Church

Monday, December 6, 2010

Morning Psalms 122; 145

First Reading Isaiah 5:8-17

Second Reading 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Gospel Luke 21:20-28

Evening Psalms 40; 67

5 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! 4 But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; 5 for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. 6 So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; 7 for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

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In two weeks Clinton United Presbyterian Church will welcome two international students into its faith community for the Christmas holiday. As the church has corresponded with these young women, a certain question has been repeated: "What will Christmas be like?" These Asian students do not know what to expect from an American Christmas celebration.

As those with significant experience of the Advent season, there's much that we have learned to expect. From carols to candlelight services, we know what is coming. Yet, 1 Thessalonians reminds us that in this season of expectedness the unexpected remains. We are reminded this Advent that we cannot expect when Jesus will return. However thoroughly we may study the Scriptures, Christ's return remains unpredictable. There is a distinct presence of the unexpected in the midst of all that we may expect from the Advent season.

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Prayer: God, there is much that we've come to expect from Advent. Remind us of the unexpected time of Christ's coming. Send your Holy Spirit amongst us as we grow closer to you in preparation for that glorious day. Amen.