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23 December, 2020

## **It Just Comes**

*"But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (John1:12)*

*Today's letter of hope was written by United Church Minister, Rev. Dr. Hugh Farquhar, and contributed with his permission by Rosalind MacDonald.*

While waiting at an airport in Atlanta, a man went into a restaurant where he was served something he had never had before. He inquired, "What is this white glob on the plate?" The server replied, "Those are grits." "But I didn't order grits," he said. She answered, "You don't order grits. They just come."

You don't order Advent either! It just comes, and God invites us to receive it with open hearts and minds.

In our culture, so much emphasis is placed on giving at this time of year. We are agonizing over what to give the people we love for Christmas. During Advent we take pains to choose appropriate gifts. We wrap them carefully to give them the best possible presentation. Many of us have been reared on the adage that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and there is no question that giving makes the world go round and has its own blessings.

But Advent needs to be just as much about preparing to receive. We will be recipients of other people's agonizing, their pains, and their care. They may have tramped a crowded Mall for who knows how long looking for that special gift that we hold in our hands-on Christmas morning.

A Roman Catholic sister was leaving a community in Africa where she had served for a decade. As she was leaving, a young man came up to her and said, "I have a gift." He gave her a seashell. She loved it and thanked him. "Where did you get it?" she asked. He told her that he had gone to the ocean to get it. "That's a hundred miles away. How did you get there?" He said he had walked, and then added, "Long walk, part of gift." Sometimes it is more blessed to receive than to give, or at least, we are equally blessed in receiving.

The shepherds did not order up the angels who brought them good tidings of great joy. They just came. The world did not order the Christ. In God's time and in God's way Jesus just came, and John wrote that "to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God." We do not order up God's grace. It just comes as a personal gift to be opened and enjoyed.

The posture of receiving, hands open and extended, waiting for the gift, is the posture of Advent. We do not manufacture it. We appropriate it as a gift. A Saviour becomes my Saviour by taking him in.

God made a long journey to give us the gift of salvation and there is nothing we need to do to deserve it or earn it. It just comes.

Loving God, prepare us to receive "the dear Christ" into our hearts and lives as we live these Advent days.

*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.  
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

