

10 December 2020

A Sacred Service of Readings and Carols

The season of Advent has come. After many years of living in the southern hemisphere where Christmas is celebrated in summer and now celebrating my third Christmas in equatorial Ghana, I still find it difficult to acclimate my mind to the season while the palm trees sway and the temperature is 35c (95f).

The final day of the semester is the date set for an evening gathering of the community for a Sacred Service of Readings and Carols. Two years ago I was selected to preach. Last year the students, as part of the evening's festivities, presented the play, *The Fourth Wiseman*. The students spend hours readying the chapel with bright banners, steamers, and a Christmas tree. (Though the tree is rather humble and has a tendency to fall.) The whole community is invited and despite the heat, the chapel is filled to standing room only.

This year, our service will be limited as Covid-19 restrictions remain in place. I am sure, at one level, the service will seem a bit lacking in its traditional feel of being a full community gathering. Nevertheless, I approach the evening with a sense of anticipation and excitement.

Fear not! Is this not the angelic overture we will again hear? Will we not again be confronted with the imperative to, *Prepare the way of the Lord*? Regardless of the size of our congregation, *Emmanuel, God With Us*, will once more be proclaimed. Our students will read the ancient texts. Our choir will sing with the joyful news. The people will dance. All will rejoice. The Lord is come!

Perhaps, it is in times such as these, the message all the more rings true.

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