

Advent 2021

Dear friends and relatives,

“Look! The Days Are Coming!”

The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah proclaimed these words repeatedly in Jerusalem during the last years of the Kingdom of Judah. The nation that had gained its heights of glory under King David and his son, Solomon, was coming to an end. Although convinced that they were God’s chosen people, they had instead become a corrupt and unjust nation no different from the other nations around it. Under King Zedekiah, the people were experiencing the final consequences of many years of this corruption and injustice. Most of the book of Jeremiah proclaims the sins of the people and the nation and the horrible consequences that gradually take shape. “Look! The days are coming!”

Yet, in the middle of the book are three chapters, 30-33, a section sometimes called the Book of Consolation. This section looks not at the chaotic present and immediate future, but at a long-term future which, despite its seeming hiddenness, the people can still embrace.

¹⁴ The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵ In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: “The LORD is our righteousness.” Jeremiah 33:14–16 (NRSV)

Jesus is that righteous branch, the one who demonstrates that our righteousness and salvation, our justice and peace, do not reside in armies or alliances, in Babylon or Egypt, in Russia or China, in Democrat or Republican, in left or right. Truly, “The LORD is our righteousness.”

We have entered the Advent season of 2021 when we proclaim, “Look! The days are coming!” We long once again for a fuller measure of the “Peace on earth, good will to all people” that the angels sang about.



Last year at this time, we had hope that the COVID-19 pandemic would be a non-issue by December 2021. Instead, humanity faces even more division, and the virus has claimed more lives in 2021 than in 2020. And while there are new vaccines and anti-viral drugs, there are also new strains of the virus with names like Delta and Omicron which threaten the lives of millions.

We are grateful for the good health that we have had in 2021 while very mindful that others are still getting sick and dying. May God grant us healing and hope in these days!

In 2021, between the realities of the pandemic and our own aging bodies and minds, our impulse to travel has been sharply curtailed.

We made one trip to Indiana together April 29 - May 4 and celebrated my son Nathan's birthday. We took two days each way instead of our previous 9-10 hours in one day. When it came time to fulfill a promised train trip for Nathan to Williamsport, I went alone, starting in August while Twila remained available for her friend who needs groceries and a listening ear. I was able to do some research in the Mennonite Church USA Archives in Elkhart, and then bring Nathan back for most of a week. On the way back to Indiana, one of our train rides turned into a bus ride, courtesy of the flooding from the remnants of Hurricane Ida in central Pennsylvania. After taking Nathan back to his home, I was also able to make a quick trip from Indiana to Illinois and spend the day with my daughter, Renita, and her husband, Matthew. When I finally arrived back home after Labor Day, I told Twila I was not going to do any more major travel for a while.

However, earlier in the summer, our travel highlight was a trip along the Blue Ridge Parkway with Twila's sister, Linda, and her husband, Phil. From our education about the history of the Cherokee people to the scenery of the Parkway, to the meaningful reflections about our formative years, it was a truly delightful and memorable trip!

I continue with a number of miscellaneous roles and responsibilities growing out of both former employment and also my current involvement as an Elder at Agape Fellowship, our church in Williamsport. At Agape, I also have had the opportunity to lead music about once a quarter and preached four times during the year.

Twila continues to create many sewn items ranging from king-sized quilts to baby bibs. She relates to friends near or far--by phone or email when necessary. Locally, I have been joining her of late when my skills are suited for setting clocks or reading the handwriting of her friend who is a shut-in. We are also building more connections with Twila's daughters and their expanding families as we have the opportunity.

Around the house, our yearend project is to transform our previously unfinished basement so that it can become an area for bigger quilt projects, better storage, and indoor exercise. The lighting is now in, the storage closet doors hung, and our contractor expects to complete the work by Christmas. We are grateful for the opportunity to create this additional space for our home life together and shared with others.

While we adjust to both the pandemic and the aging process, we are truly grateful for opportunities for the activities we still enjoy and the relationships that make life meaningful. We are aware of both pain and grief as well as comfort and joy as we take hold of Jeremiah's words, "Look! The days are coming!"

We wish you God's grace and peace in this season and throughout the year 2022!

Paul & Twila

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Twila". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and personal.