



Choirs give concert

The Colby Community College Concert Choir and the Sunflower Singers gave their annual Winter Vocal Concert on Thursday night at the college's Cultural Arts Center. The groups, directed by Dr. Phil Shuman, performed many numbers, new and old, concluding (above) with audience participation in "Joy to the World." A solo with guitar accompaniment was performed by Brittany Ritter (right) of Rexford and Jenny Dickman (with guitar) of Colby.



EVAN BARNUM/Colby Free Press

Advent gives time to anticipate Christ

Carol Rahn
First Presbyterian Church

It seems that Christmas comes earlier every year. We don't even wait for Thanksgiving anymore for carols to be playing on the radio and decorations to be displayed.

It's like sending out birth announcements before the baby Jesus is even born. We forget about how important it is to wait and anticipate with excitement the birth of this marvelous baby.

When we let Christmas come too quickly we miss the eagerness of wonder and the opportunity to prepare ourselves once again for the coming of the Christ Child. That's why I like Advent. I can prepare, get ready, and get even more excited about his birth.

Many churches don't make a make a big deal about Advent, while others it an important part of the church year. There is the lighting of the Advent candles every Sunday and singing hymns that build up the waiting and excited anticipation.

I think Advent is an important time. As we wait for any baby to be born, this time of waiting, wondering and excitement is an important part of the process. There's all the getting ready, and the many preparations that need to get done so the baby will be fully welcomed with joy and thanksgiving. So it is, I think, with Jesus' birth too. We have the chance to wonder and wait and get everything ready, including ourselves, to greet Emmanuel.

The word "Advent" means "arrival" or "coming" in Latin and represents the approach of Christ's birth, the fulfillment of the prophecies about that event, and the awaiting of Christ's second coming.

No one is exactly sure when the church began to celebrate Advent. The oldest document we have that mentions this season is a passage in the second book of the History of the Franks by St. Gregory of Tours,

where he says that St. Perpetuus, one of his predecessors, who held the same post as Gregory in about the year 480, had decreed a fast three times a week, from the feast of St. Martin until Christmas.

Today Advent is the four Sundays before Christmas day, starting on the Sunday closest to November 30, and ending on Christmas. Because Christmas is on a different day from year to year, Advent may last anywhere from 22 to 28 days.

Fasting is no longer stressed, but for Christians, Advent is a now time of reflection about the amazing gift that God gives to us in Jesus, who came to live among us on earth. It is also an opportunity to restore Jesus to His rightful place as the center of our holiday celebrations.

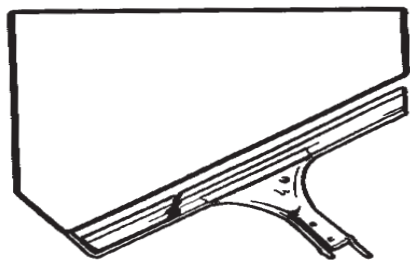
The Advent wreath and the four candles have become to most common symbol of this season. Each Sunday during Advent the candles are successively lit, until, on the fourth Sunday, all four candles are glowing. Traditionally the candles represented hope, peace, joy and love as reminders that our awaiting the fulfillment of these in God's Son. Some churches use three purple candles, representing the solemnity of the season, and one pink, representing joy, while others use four blue candles. In the center of the Advent wreath is a white Christ candle. This candle is lit on Christmas.

As we move through December, I hope we can prepare for the coming of Christ into our world and into each of our lives. I hope we can get as excited about this Bethlehem baby as we do about any new baby and be as intentional about our preparations for his birth as we would for our own child or grandchild.

I hope we can set aside some time to get ready to welcome God's Son into our world. I hope we can put aside some of the pre-Christmas frenzy, quiet ourselves for just a few minutes and remember just why we

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