ROOTED in PROMISE, RISING in PEACE

Dear Beloved in Christ,

Advent has always been my favorite season of the church year. As a child, it was the appearance of the Advent wreath in worship—and one gigantic Advent wreath displayed outside a church in our neighborhood—that signaled Christmas was on its way! In my child's mind It was so close, and yet so far, where a single day could seem like a month!

As an adult, Advent has taken on a deeper meaning (though I am still excited for Christmas!). These days, Advent holds both the heaviness of the challenges of our times and our hope in a Lord who is faithful through even the most difficult chapters of life.

This year's Advent resources draw their inspiration from the promise of Isaiah 11:1: "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." The prophet offers a vision of hope to a people facing uncertainty and loss. A stump appears dead. But just beneath the surface, life! - and from there God brings forth something new.

That image speaks powerfully to us today. We know about uncertainty, but we also know about our roots. We are rooted in the promises of our baptism, in the congregations that formed us, and in our Lutheran understanding of the gospel of grace that frees us to love our neighbors. Beneath all these roots is the enduring faithfulness of God in Jesus Christ.

The promise of Advent is not that everything will return to the way it was, but that God is not finished with us yet! Even as familiar ways of being the church are changing, God's Spirit is stirring new life.

Because we are rooted in Christ, we can rise in hope!

We pray that these resources will help your congregation rediscover the roots of God's faithfulness and see the new life already springing up in your midst. May this Advent season renew our trust in God's promises and our joy in sharing Christ's love with the world.

Rooted in Christ. Growing in grace. Rising to serve. Blessed Advent!

Bill Tesch

Bishop Bill Tesch

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