



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

My winter coat went missing about a year ago. After a few cold days last month, I was wishing I knew where it went. I spent last winter looking for it. I looked in the closets at home, in the closets at the church, and I even stopped by two funeral homes in case I had taken my coat off and left it there. It was nowhere to be found. When the weather warmed up last spring, I stopped looking and considered the coat awol.

Last month, when the four Martins were out shopping the week before Thanksgiving, I tried on a new wool coat and while it fit fine and was nice and warm, it still bugged me that I had not found my old, trustworthy wool coat of twenty plus years. Where had I left it?

I put the new wool coat back on the rack, and decided to restart my search!

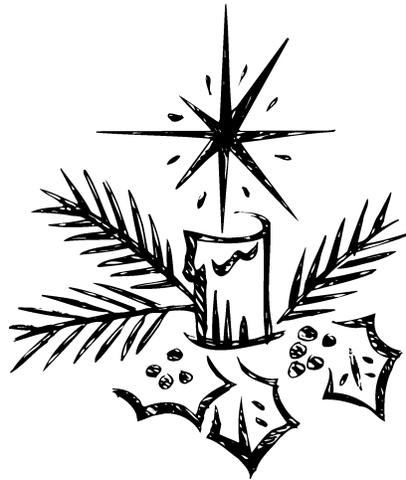
Well, a few days later I was preparing for the Thanksgiving Day service at the Cleveland church, and...hey! Wait a minute, had I worn my coat to the Thanksgiving Day Service at the Holston Valley Church last year, and it was still there? There was one place I hadn't looked last winter!

The next day I drove to the church, went inside, and in the back of the church on a wooden peg was my coat right where I had left it the previous year!

So, let me draw a couple of theological points from this gripping, edge-of-your-seat story.

Each year right around Thanksgiving, we find the Season of Advent. It's been hanging on a peg right where we left the previous year and has been waiting patiently for us to take it up again.

Advent is a trustworthy season. It begins with far-



reaching promises that layer us from the cold harshness of the world. These promises point to the culmination of time and help us make sense the days that get progressively darker and yet lead us to the brightness of Bethlehem's manger.

Trustworthy does not mean predictable. Our annual Advent observance is different each year because it happens in real time. We have all experienced life's joys and struggles since the last time we gathered for Advent, and that means we hear God's promises as people another year older and, I pray,

with a greater sense of what God-with-us means. And so we sing: *O Come, O Come Emmanuel.*

Advent is filled with the steadfast promises of God to heal our brokenness and rescue humanity. The texts of Advent are point to the covenant between God and humanity enacted in a new way – not by the agency of another – but by God becoming one of us, and showing us the way forward. And so we wait and watch for the sound of infant cries.

In Advent the ordinary becomes extra-ordinary: ordinary words become the extraordinary promises of God. Ordinary candles are given the extraordinary task of counting the weeks of this season. Ordinary front yards become places where nativity scenes are set up. Ordinary house gutters take on the extraordinary task of holding Christmas lights to light up the darkness. The mantle over the fire place becomes the extraordinary place where stockings are hung in hope of a special visitor.

In these days of Advent and soon Christmas, I hope you find yourself renewed in the story of God entering creation the way we all do – helpless and in need of swaddling clothes – and then showing us the way of life together in Christ, the way that sets all things right.

Merry Christmas to you all from all four Martins.

Nursery Helpers for December
 December 2-*Judy Briscoe and Carol White*
 December 9-*David and Jane Prater*
 December 16-*Phyllis Briscoe and Lea Combs*
 December 23-*Maria Briscoe and Norma Smith*

Prayer List

Carrie Kimery, Ann Lowry, Leroy Jones, R.W. Hilt, Jane Hilt's father, Spencer Pope, Blair Keller, Grace Garrett, Phyllis Sams, Emma Barton, Mary Lynn Ekstrom, Philip Brewer, Peggy Riley, Nell Matney, Bob Elliot, Jody Williams, Mike Altizer, Mary Gustin, Al Roper, Jeanie Evans' sister-in-law, Lucy & Joe Foster, Sarita Mullins, Connie Counts, Kaitlin Clay, Meredith Haga, Bruce Blessing, Carrie Blevins, Judy Puckett, Karen Combs, Sally Brown, Donna Abel, Carter & Emerson Hale, Kitty Pelfrey, Helen Garland, Elizabeth Ponder, Barbara Adams, David King, Bob Lowe, Lynn McConnell, Nancy Thompson, Barbara Knight, Sara Lawson, Carolyn Deaton, Virginia Thompson, Edna McConnell, Bill & Marge Margerum, Sandra Wimmer, Janet McCauley, Rhonda Moore, Eva Bailey, Bo Miller, Nancy Greary, Rickey White, Terry White, and Helen Carter.

Responding to the Good News

Date	Attendance	Offering
11-04-12	119	\$4,359.00
11-11-12	147	\$5,807.00
11-18-12	131	\$3,473.29
11-25-12	108	\$3,403.00



Sunday, December 16

11:00am Children's Christmas Play During Worship (Play written by Katherine Martin)

12:00pm Covered-Dish Dinner after Worship

Sunday, December 23

Welcome Tracy Mercadal as our new staff member!

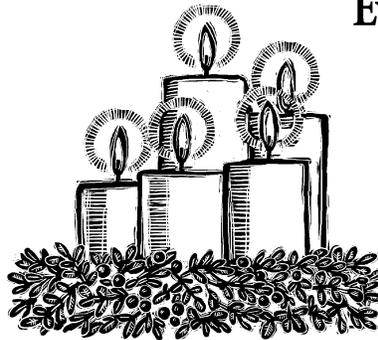
Tracy Mercadal is a King College graduate and a talented pianist. She is a Knoxville native and lives with her husband in Gray, TN.

Help welcome Tracy to Green Spring at a reception following worship on December 23.



Monday, December 24

Christmas Eve



Service at 5:00pm

Lighting the Christ Candle
 The Christmas Story
 Communion
 Candlelight



The Church Playground is Open!

Play!
 Enjoy!
 Climb!
 Swing!
 Laugh!

MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY NEW
YEAR TO ALL