Dear Lexie,

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year

"It's the most wonderful time of the year, with the kids jingle-belling and everyone telling you be of good cheer. It's the most wonderful time of the year. It's the happiest season of all. With those holiday greetings, and great happy meetings when friends come to call. It's the happiest season of all." These are the familiar lyrics of a beloved Christmas song that truly describes the joyful mood of the holiday season. Whether you are young, old, ready or not, one thing is certain-Christmas is coming! It is the anticipation of the coming or "advent" of Christmas Day, with its gift-giving and family celebrations, that makes this season so delightful. But the history of Advent focuses on the Ultimate Gift which holds a deep spiritual meaning.

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I Like the Diversity in This Church

We called it "Friends and Family Day" and that was what it proved to be. "This is my second visit to this church," said one of the scores of guests that streamed into Sligo Church on Sabbath November 15. He continued, "I like the diversity in this church. The people are all the same in some churches I go to but here there are all kinds of people." Another loved the worship experience so much that she returned in the evening with a dish of Macaroni and Cheese for a barn party, planned by the youth department and which attracted over 150 people.

Gratitude for Our Learning Center Ministry

We are thankful for the opportunity to make a positive prayer impact on the local school communities. Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the willingness of Sligo members to commit to praying daily for a school of choice. We are truly amazed by the students in the Caring Card Club who use cards to send encouraging messages to all 20 schools.

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The Most Wonderful Time of the Year

Cheryl Bridges

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The word “Advent” is derived from the Latin word adventus, meaning “coming,” which is a translation of the Greek word parousia. Scholars believe that during the 4th and 5th centuries in Spain and Gaul, Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the January feast of Epiphany, the celebration of God’s incarnation represented by the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:1), his baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (John 1:29), and his first miracle at Cana (John 2:1). By the 6th century, however, Roman Christians had tied Advent to the coming of Christ. But the “coming” they had in mind was not Christ’s first coming in the manger in Bethlehem, but his second coming in the clouds as the judge of the world. It was not until the Middle Ages that the Advent season was explicitly linked to Christ’s first coming at Christmas.

Here at Sligo, we celebrate the Advent Season with our focus on the first and second comings of Jesus Christ. We light the Advent candles on the four Sabbaths after Thanksgiving that lead up to Christmas. We display the Advent wreath, a circular candle holder that typically holds five candles. During the season of Advent one candle on the wreath is lit each Sabbath until all the candles including the fifth candle are lit on Christmas Sabbath. Each candle represents an aspect of the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

For us this is the most wonderful time of the year. We celebrate Jesus’ birth while we anticipate his glorious Second Coming. We look forward to the day when our family greetings and great happy meetings will last an eternity.

Sources:


I Like the Diversity in This Church!

We called it “Friends and Family Day” and that was what it proved to be. “This is my second visit to this church,” said one of the scores of guests that streamed into Sligo Church on Sabbath November 15. He continued, “I like the diversity in this church. The people are all the same in some churches I go to but here there are all kinds of people.” Another loved the worship experience so much that she returned in the evening with a dish of Macaroni and Cheese for a barn party, planned by the youth department and which attracted over 150 people.

“Does God Have Favorites?” was Senior Pastor’s Charles Tapp’s sermon title on a day when several members brought their friends and family members to church. Tapp assured worshippers that God does not have favorites but favors those who put their trust in Him. The worship experience was enhanced by the majestic and cultured sounds of the Columbia Collegiate Chorale of Washington Adventist University and the New England Youth Ensemble of the same institution.

In addition to a reception following the 11:00 a.m. service, guests were also treated to a gift bag containing Clifford Goldstein’s “Life Without Limits,” a copy of Steps to Christ, a welcome booklet and a chocolate bar. One wasn’t sure whether the rush by many guests to get a gift bag had to do with the quality of the two books or the lure of a Snicker bar. Either way, they left with precious spiritual resources in their hand.

Sligo Leaders were keen to ensure that the experience for guests was not different from what happens each Sabbath. In addition to more than one thousand worshippers in the sanctuary, Sligo Underground (youth church), Crossroads (a congregation for Young Adults) and Sligo Children’s Church buzzed with music, songs, engaging activities and age-relevant Bible study.

Friends and Family Day is an integral part of Sligo Church’s outreach program and an attempt to bring the church closer to the community and vice-versa. One guest’s comments expressed succinctly what this event, which is expected to become an annual feature in the church’s calendar, was all about: “I enjoyed it. It was different from what I am used to but I was blessed.” Equally blessed were those who planned the event and those who courageously invited their friends or family members to accompany them to church.

Every Sabbath should be a Friends and Family Day, because the church exists, not just for members but also for non-members – for friends, acquaintances and family of members. In fact, “the church exists primarily for non-members.”
We are thankful for the opportunity to make a positive prayer impact on the local school communities.

Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the willingness of Sligo members to commit to praying daily for a school of choice.

We are truly amazed by the students in the Caring Card Club who use cards to send encouraging messages to all 20 schools.

Our heart skip several beats for the volunteers who invest their time and talents to mentor our your club students.

We are delighted for the parents who support their children in this ministry endeavor.

We are humbled by the accepting grace of the school leaders who gladly accept this prayer coverage.

We are thankful for the Holy Spirit sustaining power to keep this ministry going.

May the fruits of this ministry fill many cornucopias of blessings in many homes this season.

(by Chris Daley & Dawn Reynolds)