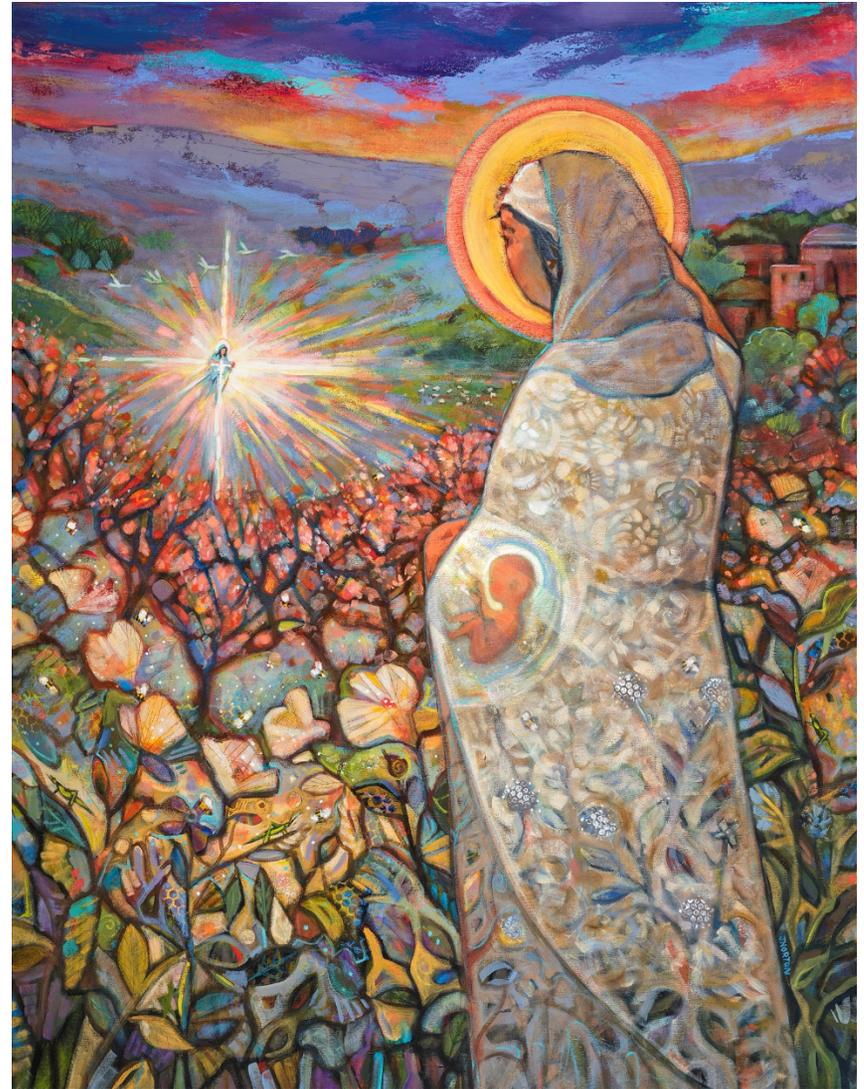


*Fall Creek Abbey  
Advent Retreat 2022*

## Feeling the Wait

Welcome to the Fall Creek Abbey Advent Retreat 2022! Bless you for choosing to take time out from your full life to be here. Because you've likely arrived with a lot on your mind and heart, it's often helpful to begin by noticing how you come to the time. How are you feeling about being here? What kind of shape are you in personally, spiritually, mentally and physically?

Write down your honest responses to these questions in the space provided. After checking in with yourself, use your reflections as a prompt to engage in a real and candid conversation with God. Tell God about how you feel right now. Ask God to meet you during this time.



Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth by Jen Norton  
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## Feeling the Wait

At one time or another, any person on any kind of spiritual journey will encounter the perplexing experience of waiting on God to “show up.” This vocation of waiting is one of the common themes of Advent, as explained by Scott Erickson in his book, *Honest Advent*.

*Advent means “coming” in Latin, and these weeks are meant to prepare our hearts, minds, and souls for the arrival of God-with-Us, Jesus Christ, born to the virgin Mary a couple of millennia ago. You’re supposed to feel the wait—the anticipated arrival of something you want so badly—and by feeling the wait deeply, you’ll be even more satisfied by the celebration of the arrival on Christmas Day.”*

During Advent, we’re invited to linger in the liminal space of anticipation—to long for Jesus to “show up,” just as the characters in the first Advent longed for their Messiah to come and deliver them from oppression. As Erickson put it, *Advent invites us to feel the wait of Christ’s coming—an experience that intensifies our desire for, anticipation of, and delight in Jesus.*

In a way, waiting is like a womb. It’s a dark and mysterious place of being, and a rich and fertile place of becoming. It’s a catalyst for purifying our heart’s desires. Yet this womb of waiting is not always an easy place to inhabit.

You may be an impatient waiter like me (Beth). You may find waiting more like a crucible. You typically agonize in this in-between-state of living-in-longing. And, like me, you may also know from experience that in the hidden womb of waiting God does a deep and wonderful work. Waiting can be transforming.

**Consider some of the transformation that can happen when we wait:**

- Waiting helps us get in touch with what we really, really, really desire.
- Waiting intensifies our search for God’s presence and action in our life and world as it heightens our dependence on God.
- Waiting nips at our attachments to things that aren’t as important as the real stuff of life. It helps us re-order what we truly love.
- Waiting interferes with our ingrained personality patterns and structures, challenging their unrestricted influence.

This guide is designed to help you “*feel the wait*” of Advent through connecting your own life experiences with the theme of waiting found in the past, present, and future Advent of Christ. We’ll begin by reflecting on that very first Advent and the characters surrounding the birth of Jesus.

## Feeling the Wait of New Birth

Read Luke 1 & 2 slowly and reflectively, noticing the theme of waiting. Write down what stands out to you.

Think of a time in your life when you were anticipating the birth of something new. A graduation, a marriage, a child, a new job, home, or opportunity. What was it like to wait for its fulfillment? What attitudes, capacities, character qualities, or perspectives did waiting birth in you?

*“Feel the wait”* with Zechariah and Elizabeth, Gabriel and Mary, the shepherds, Simeon and Anna. What was each one waiting for? What effect do you suppose waiting had on them?

Is there anything new you are waiting for right now? Take time to enter the “womb of waiting” as you pray for this new thing you long for or are anticipating. Write a prayer of consent to *“feel the wait”* of new birth.

## Feeling the Wait of Becoming

We speak of Advent not only in past tense, but also in present tense. After all, we need Jesus to “show up” in our lives *today*. Take a moment and consider, “What situation am I facing today where I’m particularly aware of my need for Jesus?”

One of the common ways we experience our daily need for Christ is through struggling with our own personality dysfunctions. If we’re honest, we grapple today with some of the same issues we’ve grappled with our whole lives. Oh, to be free of these gremlins!

It can be encouraging to realize that this longing we have for healing and wholeness is a reflection of God’s longing that we increasingly become our true and authentic selves as we become more like Jesus. Yet this “becoming” doesn’t happen quickly or easily. It takes time, patience, and tenacity as we cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

The Apostle Paul expressed his (and God’s) longing for Christ’s character to be formed in us using some very graphic, feminine imagery. He said he felt like a mother in labor, waiting to give birth!

Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I’m going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives.

Galatians 4:19

Take a few moments to consider where God is currently at work in your inner life—an aspect of your personality that you wish you could change but continue to struggle with?

God also waits. How does God seem toward you in the in-between? (Frustrated? Impatient? Understanding? Hopeful? Tender?)

As you consider this personality pattern where you desire greater freedom, *feel the wait* of longing for Christ to “be formed in you.” Bring this matter into conversation with Jesus. From this “womb of waiting,” write a pray for healing and wholeness.

## Feeling the Wait of Redemption

Advent also has a future tense as we look forward to the coming of Christ and the restoration of the world. One day Jesus Christ will return to lovingly reign over the new heaven and earth for all eternity! Truthfully, the idea can seem a bit fairy-tale like to our postmodern minds.

But just for a moment, imagine everything in the world and in your life being redeemed. What a hopeful vision! That's the final promise of Advent, "Look, I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21:5). This is just the vantage point in which we are invited to *feel the wait*.

Take several minutes to read over the following verses of scripture about waiting for the final Advent of Jesus Christ. Notice what stands out to you, what speaks to your own heart. Write down anything that seems important.

- "For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed" (Romans 8:19).
- "But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior" (Philippians 3:20).
- "And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ was offered

once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him" (Hebrews 9:27-28).

- "Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen" (James 5:7).

Now, back to that hopeful vision of Christ redeeming everything in the world and your life. What is it specifically, in your past or present, that you desperately desire Jesus to redeem? Mistakes you've made? Pain and loss that you've suffered or caused others to suffer? A broken heart or relationship? Take a moment to scan your life and write down what comes to mind.

Now bring this longing into conversation with Jesus, *feeling the wait* of his redemption of it. Express your desire for Christ to make all things new, including this grief. Linger with Jesus as you listen for his words of wisdom, comfort, and hope.

## Closing

Advent invites us to feel the wait of Christ's coming—an experience that can intensify our desire for, anticipation of, and delight in Jesus.

And waiting is like a womb. It's a dark and mysterious place of being, and a rich and fertile place of becoming. It's a catalyst for purifying our heart's desires. Yet this womb of waiting is not always an easy place to inhabit.

End your retreat by reflecting on what it is like for you to "feel the wait of Christ's coming." What have you come to discover about this womb of waiting that you don't want to forget?

Here are some final words about waiting from the wise sage, Henri J. M. Nouwen. Savor them and allow them to be a prompt for prayer as you end your retreat.

To wait with openness and trust is an enormously radical attitude toward life. It is choosing to hope that something is happening for us that is far beyond our own imaginings. It is giving up control over our future and letting God define our life. It is living with the conviction that God molds us in love, holds us in tenderness, and moves us away from the sources of our fear.

Our spiritual life is a life in which we wait, actively present to the moment, expecting that new things will happen to us, new things that are far beyond our own imagination or prediction. This, indeed, is a very radical stance toward life in a world preoccupied with control.

The Henri Nouwen Society, [Radical Waiting](#) 12/1/2022

May you find grace to *feel the wait* of Advent and be transformed by it!

Warmly, Beth and David Booram  
Fall Creek Abbey