
DAYBREAKING NEWS

Reflections by Amy Notbohm

The Second Week in Advent

Ugly Llama Christmas Sweaters

My husband sings in the Orpheus Men's Chorus of Phoenix, the longest running choir in Phoenix, celebrating over 90 years of bringing music to the valley. As with all things COVID, they have had to adjust by cancelling their in-person concerts and finding new ways to sing over the internet. Recently, they recorded videos for the holiday season, and they all needed over-the-top Christmas sweaters. He found this lovely llama.



As someone less inclined to adopt this new tradition, I have always wondered why the “ugly Christmas sweater” is a trend. I think there are a few reasons. First, it takes many of us back to the time when the festive Christmas sweaters were just part of the celebration; it hits our nostalgia button. But maybe more importantly, it adds good fun, brings smiles and good-natured humor to all who see them.

In Pavlovitz's, *LOW*, Week 2, Wednesday, we read his take on *Living Parables*. He says, “The adage is true that when you have children, you see the world again through their eyes [I would add that they

don't need to be your own children] Almost by osmosis, you absorb some of their wonder, their optimism, their simple, undistracted joy in the present – things that tend to be elusive as you become a proper adult.” Maybe this is why Jesus inserted miracles into his parables, adding bits of wonder to the ordinary. Reminding us that in his stories of how to be in the world and how the world works that the whole thing is miraculous. Maybe every time someone takes their festive llama sweater out of the closet, they are adding a bit of wonder to the ordinary and challenging us to see the world a little differently.

I have two favorite Christmas movies, *ELF*, which is a family favorite that we watch every year to kick off the season – it's full of silliness and holiday cheers, and *Rise of the Guardians*. This one is a little less well known, but without going into the whole storyline, each of the characters, Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy, and the Sandman, each represent something to the children of the world. The thing that Santa represents is wonder. Gifts given with grace, unexpected surprises, mystery the unexplainable.

As we journey through this advent season, when every day seems to hold an overabundance of ordinary and boring (if not worse), I invite you to join me in trying to find the wonder in the ordinary. Can you wear your ugly Christmas sweater? Or watch a favorite movie? Listen to a beautiful song or surprise someone with an unexpected call or gift? Every time we help create a little wonder for someone we are creating an experience for them to encounter God. Let us know what you do this week or what sorts of wonderful things or experiences you encounter!

The Church as a Neighbor

I'd like to introduce you all to the *Neighboring Movement*. The Neighboring Movement is a non-profit that works to connect people with their neighbors as a way to help restore the social fabric and health of our neighborhoods. They are doing some amazing work in Wichita, Kansas in practicing the lost art of neighboring. They approach their neighborhoods with Abundance, Relationship, and Joy. They believe everyone is gifted, and that when people share their gifts, the whole community gets stronger.

When I came across their work, I couldn't help but hear parallels to the work and history of Aldersgate and Dayspring. As I learned about what they are doing in Kansas, I wondered if we can use some of their ideas and tools to help re-ground Dayspring Arcadia as a church that is a neighbor to the newer residents around Aldersgate that we have yet to meet. So, I've been testing out some of the ideas. As we have held parking lot events like COVID testing and Borderlands P.O.W.W.O.W., the volunteers and I have been able to meet a few neighbors, and guess what? When we start talking about neighboring and wanting to help be neighborhood connection point, they are interested!

So, one thing that's on my mind is how we can collect stories of the neighborhood, specifically in the few blocks right around the church that we can share with the newer-neighbors as we meet them. For example, they could be about when the church was first built. I remember Darlene

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Pastor

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telling me about Sunday School meeting in Quonset huts. Or, it could be about a memorable neighborhood picnic, or a time the church and its neighbors came together to help someone local in need. I would love to collect your stories and find ways for us to share them. If anything comes to mind, I'd love to hear them – you can call me – 480-302-1768, or write them up, whatever is easier.

Amy

Community Prayers

- We continue to pray for Lee Smith, recovering from shoulder surgery & having Rheumatoid arthritis pain, Martha Stowe and Gail Everts, having some arthritis issues, also prayers for Lorraine Meno.

If you have prayers or concerns please let Pastor Tom, Amy Notbohm or the church office know.

Giving

Thank you for your continued support for the work and ministry of Aldersgate UMC; 3530 North 32nd Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85018-5609.

Our upcoming Events

Saturday, December 19, Borderlands P.O.W.O.W. distribution event in the church parking lot runs from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Volunteers should arrive at 6:00 a.m.

Sunday, December 20, Blue Christmas Service (on-line) begins at 4:00 p.m.



Our Thanksgiving offering for the benefit of Mount of Olives Lutheran Church food closet was \$140.00.

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