



The Sacred Year

A Contemplative Journey
through the Liturgical Year

REV. DR. LYN PACE

Praise for *The Sacred Year*

“For students and college chaplains, Lyn weaves together the various rhythms of time we all live in—world events, liturgical season, and the academic year. For everyone, he invites us to recognize the sacred in the ordinary tasks of our days and in the tender moments of life and death. In the busy-ness and emotional weight of daily life in the 21st century, Lyn offers ancient contemplative practices that nourish our souls and empower us to live lives of justice and compassion in solidarity with our neighbors who are marginalized and oppressed. I look forward to sharing this book with colleagues and students seeking to put their faith in action, courageously offering hope in anxious times.”

—The Reverend Lisa Garvin, chaplain and minister
to the university, Southern Methodist University

“The author’s exquisite introduction and subsequent chapters assume a clear and compelling position for attention to the daily rhythms of our lives. He sets the stage for understanding concepts of time, engaging contemplation, and honoring cycles, rituals, and liturgy that mark our life journeys. The invitations and contemplations of the liturgical calendar embedded in each page are accessible to all of us regardless of our spiritual and religious leniencies. This might be the book’s greatest strength.

—Dr. Patricia Owen-Smith, professor emerita
of psychology, Oxford College of Emory University

“What a delightful contemplative commentary on the Christian liturgical year. In *The Sacred Year*, Lyn Pace has written a playful yet serious opening to how and why the Church keeps time with Jesus. The seasons of the church’s worship life are here, illuminated by the rhythms of our common life, deftly sketched in these newspaper columns over time. In these pages, these brief columns have become pastoral and theological touchstones. Take and read. You will come away with a fresh view of how ritual time shapes our lived experience, and why we must always bring our lived experience to the images and themes of the church year.”

—Dr. Don E. Saliers, theologian-in-residence,
Candler School of Theology

THE SACRED YEAR

A Contemplative Journey
through the Liturgical Year

By the Reverend Dr. Lyn Pace

South Carolina United Methodist Advocate Press

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*This book is dedicated to family:
to the memory of my father, Phil,
and in honor of my parents, Debbie and Noble,
and to the ones I get to do life with every day, Ami and Sam.*

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Introduction

The Senev Hall bell rings across the campus of Oxford College of Emory University, founded in 1836. The bell, located inside the clock tower, looks over the beautiful quadrangle of this campus where I have been the college chaplain the past thirteen years. It towers above frisbees whizzing, sushi in the Sukkah during the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, animals blessed every fall, tricycle races during one of our signature orientation activities—the Oxford Olympics—and much more. It moves time along as we study, work, live, and play, chiming once on the half hour and the number of times as the hour every sixty minutes throughout the day. Housed in an iconic building, the bell has been a constant presence for almost 150 years.

We bend the will of the bell for our own purposes, too. Annually, at our commencement ceremony, we ring it for each of our graduates, giving ritual meaning to this important moment in their life. The bell will then chime once more for each of those graduates, at the annual alumni memorial gathering during the year in which they have died. The program begins and ends underneath the clock tower where an alumnus or current student reads the names of those who have died in the last year. The program lists each person's name, title, and class year. This is another way of keeping time.

Clearly and naturally, we narrate our lives according to time. I have been in college chaplaincy for twenty years now, for instance. For as long as I can remember, I have been obsessed with time. For example, I love calendars—wall calendars, desktop calendars, Shutterfly calendars. In fact, I am the one every year who creates the wall calendars full of family pictures from the previous year for my spouse, both sets of parents, and even for myself now.

It all started with an Advent calendar I used every year as a child to count down the days to Christmas. Not a religious Advent calendar, this one always began on December 1 and ended on Christmas Day. Every day of December, year after year,

I placed the Velcro-backed gingerbread person, candy cane, Santa's sleigh, and other festive holiday-themed pieces onto that felt wall calendar.

The excitement of Christmas drove that experience for me, of course, but I also remember a feeling of accomplishment, as I would place each piece marking time and that unique season in my life. Using the same calendar year after year, I realize now, was also instrumental in shaping my experience of time.

Time defines us. We see this in the way it shows up in our everyday language: I am out of time. I hope I get there in or on time. We had the time of our lives. Time is money. Time is precious. How are you going to spend your time? I just do not have enough ... time.

My two grandmothers schooled me on time as they reflected on how quickly it moves, especially as one gets older. Minnie Lou, my paternal grandmother, would look at me and sigh, "Lyn, time moves on." She did not have to say much more than that; combined with the sigh, I took her meaning to heart. Time will not wait for you, and one day you will wake up and realize you are almost out of it. Meanwhile, my maternal grandmother, Jenny, was fond of telling me, "Do what you can live with." She was a straight shooter, and this phrase always seemed to crop up when we were talking about making decisions about how I would spend my time. I heard in her simple phrase, "Listen well, choose wisely, and do what you can live with. There is only so much time."

There is no shortage of references to time, including in the music we listen to. Tunes we may consider sacred and secular often include lyrics about the impact of time. Throughout this book, you will notice the importance music has in our lives, especially as we think about the liturgical year. Listening closely to music can reveal about time that which is beautiful as well as that which haunts. Take what Eric Clapton and Will Jennings wrote about time in the classic "Tears in Heaven," noting how time can level a person.

How we decide to use our time is an important part of our life. It shapes outcomes and determines the ways in which we make meaning. Sometimes we choose how we deal with time, while so often it deals with us by dictating our journey.

We live our lives by chronological time for the most part. *Chronos* is the personification of time in Greek mythology, and it is also the root of the word chronological. It refers to an ordered time that is measured and quantitative. But there is another kind of time that shows up in the Greek New Testament and that is *kairos*, which refers to "the right or proper time present, in which God has brought a new dimension to reality."¹ Every time we hear about God's reign at hand, this is a reference to

1. Hoyt L. Hickman, Don E. Saliers, Laurence Hull Stookey, and James F. White, *The New Handbook of the Christian Year* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 17.

kairos time. It is this type of time in which I am most interested in having us learn and think about in the pages that follow.

Inspired by my relationship with time, I decided to write the book you hold in your hands now. The book is also the result of a lunch meeting.

In February 2016, a former colleague and future friend who was the general manager of the local newspaper, *The Covington News*, invited me to lunch at the newest and most popular lunch destination on our local square.

“I want you to write a monthly religion article,” she said.

I slid the fried pickle into my mouth. I could tell I was excited and very nervous. I was not sure I had enough to say, and I did not know if I had enough time for this. I had no idea how long the gig would last, but I figured it would at least be a year.

I almost turned it down.

“Will I ever have enough to write about in the span of a month’s time for an entire year?” I remember saying to my spouse.

Thank goodness, I said I would do it. It has been a generative practice for me.

Six years and more than seventy articles later, I continue to write for the local paper and usually turn in each month’s article . . . you guessed it, on time. As I approached year five, I began to search them to see what common themes emerged. I wrote about race and racial injustice, community, college chaplaincy, religion, contemplative practices, and what it means to pay attention to the ways in which we make meaning in the world. Mark Twain said, “Write what you know about.” So I did or at least tried to.

One of the themes that appeared repeatedly, however, was the Christian Year, also known as the liturgical calendar. The Christian calendar developed in the early church and hearkened back to its Jewish roots while also capturing the spirit of time that emerged in the earliest portions of the New Testament. As a lifelong United Methodist and now ordained clergy, I have followed this calendar and its seasons most of my life. It was more than twenty years ago, while in seminary and under the tutelage of Dr. Don Saliers, that I started to pay closer attention to how the seasons helped order time in alternative ways in my own life, as well as how they are meant to do so for the life of the church. As I lived into my vocation of ministry, the impact of this calendar became stronger in my life and showed up in my writing in recent years. While I wrote and turned in my articles based on the Gregorian calendar, I consistently introduced another way of keeping time—so much so that I knew I wanted to write this book.

In those same five years, I completed a doctor of ministry degree at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. For my project, I developed a course about community to teach at Oxford College. Also, in that span of time, I co-taught a course on contemplative practices and social justice with Dr. Patricia Owen-Smith,

now retired from teaching psychology and women and gender studies courses at Oxford College.

Patti taught me how to introduce and use contemplative practices in the classroom with students. Her most recent scholarship has focused on the place and impact of the contemplative mind in higher education.² Her influence on my understanding of contemplative practices cannot be underestimated and was timely as I wrote these articles each month. She helped save my life during the stressful days of doctoral work by reminding me of my own capacity for paying greater attention to self, neighbor, and creation through these practices. It also reminded me how I am grounded by my relationship to that which I name as sacred. For me, that is God.

As I read the articles again, the themes of the liturgical year and paying attention were the connective tissue holding together five years of writing. I collected these thoughts into one place in hopes it would become a guide and resource for understanding how we might think about and keep time differently. I am not naive enough to think the liturgical year is the only way most of us will keep time after you read the book. Time as we have always known and lived it will be the dominant force in our lives. But I hope it will allow you to consider time in another way or from another angle to pay attention with deeper intention.

Of course, it is worth mentioning here that COVID-19 affected our relationship to time as it spread across the globe in 2020, 2021, and now. Time seemed to stand still in the late winter and spring of 2020. For so many of us, this started during the liturgical season of Lent and into Easter, especially. The ongoing influence of the pandemic affects our view of time and will for years to come. You will notice this theme in some of the more recent articles.

This book invites you to pair the liturgical calendar with the everyday rhythms of your life. The grouping of contemplative practices at the end of each chapter offers a way to slow down and reflect by reminding us that our body is as important as our mind when connecting to the sacred, self, neighbor, and creation. Our bodies hold the capacity for immense education in how we live life, and contemplative practices are one path down which we may travel to use our bodies to rest, reflect, and renew. This, I believe, may be the key to helping us live a different kind of time. I hope it will open us up to the possibility of keeping sacred time according to the liturgical calendar.

Each chapter focuses on a liturgical season and follows a similar pattern. First, I briefly explain the season and its purpose as part of the Christian liturgical year. These introductions include the meaning and history of the season, the liturgical

2. Patricia Owen-Smith, *The Contemplative Mind in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).

color associated with it, and finally some hymns and songs important to the season. My hope is you will spend a moment searching for those songs and adding them to your collection of ways to engage the contemplative.

Next, I share articles that I have written over the course of the last six years. Some of the stories, traditions, and experiences in these articles mark a particular moment in time, while others are timeless. They relate to and/or take place during the liturgical season, and I have selected them to illuminate its meaning and to be read as devotions during that season. I have added the month and year in which they were written, as well as the original title of the article, to set them in the context of what was going on in the world during that time.

Finally, I offer a grouping of contemplative practices carefully chosen to accompany that season and explain how they are connected.³ I then choose one or two practices from the grouping to offer more detail as to how one might use it during the liturgical season of that chapter. It is my hope this offers you a tangible way to be a practitioner in your own life as well as in connection to the lives of others, the earth, and perhaps even with that which you name as sacred.

The vision for this book is to offer you, the reader, another way to keep time as you discern the ways in which to live with greater intention, awareness, and meaning in your family, community, and the world. The practices give you an intentional way to train your attention to the sacred, self, neighbor, and creation for the living of these complex and important days.

In her poem, “Messenger,” Mary Oliver says, “My work is loving the world.”⁴ She describes the world and herself in beautiful and descriptive language. Like in much of her poetry, she deepens our attention to what is around us by encouraging us to look up and consider love. Similarly, the ministry of Jesus invites us to look up and love. The biblical passages that inspire me most these days are the ones where Jesus demonstrates his own commitment to the contemplative and then follows it by being in the thick of things with humanity no matter what. It is my hope that this book will inspire you in a similar way of being with each other and all of creation.

An important note: It is important to me, and my hope to you as well, to locate myself in time and space as I write the book. I have written the book, for the most part, in my geographic location in Oxford, Georgia, a town of some Methodist renown. It is important to note, though, that the Methodists were not the first people to live and settle on this land. In fact, in 1821, fifteen years before the founding of Emory College in Oxford, the Muscogee (Creek) people were forced to relinquish

3. The groupings of contemplative practices are drawn from *The Tree of Contemplative Practices* (see image, page 21, or at <https://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree>). Much of my work on this subject is credited to Dr. Owen-Smith and the work of The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society.

4. Mary Oliver, *Thirst* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 1.

this land. They lived, worked, produced knowledge on, and nurtured the land where my house and our college now sit.⁵

As I think about my own identities, I acknowledge my own place of great privilege. I am a white, cisgender male who lives in the US South. In addition, I am a Christian who also identifies as a United Methodist clergyperson. As with any of us and our identities, mine are a part of my daily existence and how I walk in the world. Just as I have written a book calling us to deeper attention and intention in our relationship to time and how we engage the world, I am constantly doing this same work with my identities.

In the Christian tradition, there are many ways of knowing about and living out the Christian liturgical year. Some of us come to it with very little or no knowledge, while others of us not only keep the seasons, but we also keep feast days and other important days in the liturgical calendar that shape our life as individuals and as the church. As a United Methodist, I bring a specific lens from my training, and even more so in my lived experience, with the seasons of the Christian year. My hope is that this will not limit those of you who come with deep knowledge and experience as well as those who come with none. With each chapter's brief introduction, I hope you will understand the gift of that season in our lives even more than before you first read it. The devotions that illuminate the seasons and the practices designed to help us lean into a call to action in our everyday lives are meant to be accessible to all. My hope is that even those who come to this book with no or another faith or spiritual tradition will find belonging in these pages.

As you will see in the acknowledgments at the end of the book, I have been blessed by a wealth of individuals and communities who have shaped and formed my understanding of self, neighbors, the earth, and the sacred. In the end, though, I take full responsibility for all of what follows.

5. I am grateful to Emory University's Land Acknowledgement for assisting me with my own understanding and language here.

Chapter 1

ADVENT

The liturgical year begins with Advent, a season when, as one of my mentors says, “Christians mark the beginning of liturgical time by recalling the end of time.”¹ This season of waiting, watching, and wondering is when we prepare for the coming of Jesus as a babe and the coming again of Jesus in final glory. We live in between these advents, the place where we encounter the mysteries of time directly.

In Western churches, Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and is celebrated each of those Sundays with seasonal colors, special music, and other traditions that have developed over time in the church.

The liturgical color has historically been violet or purple since the thirteenth century. In recent years, though, some churches have adopted blue, a color associated with hope. For instance, the church where I worship, which is part of a more formal liturgical church tradition, has moved to the blue paraments for worship, whereas one friend, in the Catholic tradition, notes that his church remains staunchly devoted to the original purple. As you move throughout the book, we will discover that each liturgical season is associated with a particular color.

The music of Advent matches the season’s meaning. “O, Come, O Come Emmanuel,” one of the most popular Advent hymns, relies heavily on scriptural references of the season as it unfolds a message of anticipation, not just for the coming of the one Christians worship, Jesus, but of a Messiah for Israel as was foretold throughout the Hebrew Bible. In a more directly Christian way, the prolific hymn writer Charles Wesley describes the coming of Jesus and the purpose of Advent in “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus.”

1. Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 222.

His 1744 text summarizes the hopes of the prophets as well as the paradox of the two advents: “born a child and yet a king.”² He writes:

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.³

The Advent wreath and the themes of the four Sundays are two traditions that have evolved over time and are still practiced by most churches who celebrate the season. The four Sundays are each associated with a theme that usually reflect the readings of the day as well as the overall sense of the season itself. In the churches I am most familiar with, the most common themes in order are hope, peace, joy, and love.

The Advent wreath is a practice found in both homes and churches and involves a circular wreath usually adorned with a type of greenery containing four candles to match each of the Sundays. A fifth white candle, the “Christ Candle,” is often placed in the center and usually lit on Christmas Eve. The other four candles’ color match the color the church has chosen for the season—blue or purple. Sometimes the third candle is rose, representing *Gaudete* (Latin for rejoicing) Sunday, where the biblical texts deal with rejoicing in the Lord. In my experience, individuals or families of the church are invited to light each of the candles, read a text associated with that Sunday and candle, and talk about the theme of the day.

In the devotions that follow, it is my hope that you will come to understand more about the season itself as well as deeply discover the themes as they are illuminated in the writings. In some instances, you will hear about specific traditions in my life, such as Santa Claus, a tradition that goes back to the Christian saint Nicholas. You may find googling some of these traditions helpful to learn more about their origins.

Waiting, Watching, Wonder

December 2016

I remember how I felt as a child when Christmas Eve would roll around every

2. Saliers, 222.

3. Charles Wesley, “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus,” in *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 196.

year. It was magical. In the earlier years of my life as my family and I would travel across town from one family gathering to the next, I would look up at the sky and think to myself, “I wonder if I’ll see the sleigh this year.” As I grew deeper into my teenage and college years and began focusing more on the religious significance of Christmas as a Christian, I started paying attention to the stars in the sky. “How brilliant that it was a star that led the wisest of the wise to the baby,” I’d think. Whether my thoughts were motivated by Santa or Jesus, Christmas has always been magical. It still is.

As a Christian minister and leader today, I am drawn into Christmas even more because of the holy season of Advent. Churches with a strong liturgical thread celebrate the season of Advent, four weeks that help us prepare to enter the Christmas season. The Sundays of Advent have themes of joy, hope, love, and peace—all themes that make sense when thinking about the Christian story of Christmas. These themes not only beckon us to look back at the story of Jesus as a baby, but they also invite us to look at the present and even ahead as we anticipate a world where joy, hope, love, and peace prevail. We are not there yet, but Advent draws us into creating this kind of world.

Advent derives from the Latin and means “coming.” It is about a God who came to us in the presence of a baby. It is about a God who comes to us now in Scripture, meals, community, and our everyday lives. In addition, it is about a God who will come again. It asks us to figure out what we are preparing for in our own lives, to slow down even in a busy season such as this to pay attention to this question.

Ultimately, for me, Advent is about three W’s—waiting, watching, and wondering. None of these is easy to come by in our technology-driven, fast-paced, and complex lives. What would happen, though, if we stepped back from these complexities each day leading up to Christmas for just fifteen minutes? Maybe nothing, but it is worth a shot. What would happen if in those fifteen minutes we spent time writing a gratitude list? Alternatively, maybe we spend that time in prayer, meditation, and/or reflection? What about fifteen minutes of silence, something hard to come by at any point during the year?

Go ahead: Shut your office door, turn off your music, silence your phone, put the screen of your laptop down, hide the shopping list, and spend fifteen minutes in quiet. When was the last time you did that?

Sustaining practices like this in a season that calls us to wait, watch, and wonder prepare us not only for the coming of Jesus but for practices to become habits. A habit like these repetitive practices have the potential to help us know that we are not alone. To help us know that we are responsible for each other, the community. It will also help us see how the community takes responsibility for us.

In this holy season of Advent, whether you celebrate Christmas or not, I invite

you to step back from it all for a moment. Practice paying attention. It may help you see what you have been waiting on or watching for. It may just lead you down the path of wonder. This is a magical season; may the joy of it be yours now and always.

The Most Wonder-filled Time of the Year

December 2017

In the Christian tradition we celebrate Advent, and one of the ways we mark the season is with four Sundays usually starting in late November or early December and leading us to Christmas Day and the Christmas season. Advent is a season of waiting and watching and preparing for the coming of Christ—as a baby and also again in final glory.

During this holy season of Advent, we read some interesting biblical passages in anticipation of the birth of the one we Christians follow, Jesus, born in a manger around the back of an inn that had no room for him. We read Scripture texts in the Hebrew Bible about how lions will lay down with lambs and little children will be our leaders. In the New Testament, we read about John the Baptist who wore clothing made of camel's hair, wore a leather belt, and ate locusts. He preached a message of good news and repentance from the margins of the wilderness as he announced that Jesus would come after him and baptize with more than just water but also the Holy Spirit.

Then there is my favorite, Mary. Mary, Jesus' mother, sings a beautiful song of praise in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, referred to as the Magnificat. She sings:

With all my heart I glorify the Lord! ...
He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant. ...
He has shown strength with his arm.
He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.
He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty-handed.⁴

Just as Jesus was born in a humble setting and preached a gospel message of love and humility, so too we are called to this kind of life. I guess it is a strange thing to talk about the vulnerable, oppressed—“lowly” as Mary says—and how it is to these that Jesus comes and offers love and compassion. It seems to me that this goes

4. Luke 1:46, 1:48, 1:51-53 (CEB).

against much of what swirls around us these days about the place and importance of power and privilege.

I wonder where we see these Scripture texts in action in our world today. I wonder where we may see the message show up at this very moment as we watch people lose their status because of their actions. Where do we see them at work in our own lives as leaders and followers as well as in the lives of those whom we consider our leaders? It is an interesting question, and it is one of the questions of Advent.

The Advent texts ask that we examine our lives and the lives of those we hold in high esteem. Mary's song of praise is a model for how we might fashion our own ways of walking in the world, how we hold leaders and mentors accountable, and how we remember what the message of Christmas brings to our lives, our communities, and to our world.

As the Christmas lyrics tell us, "It's the most wonderful time of the year." And it is for those who celebrate this season, especially when we allow the words from Mary's song and John's preaching and the prophets' writings to shape the way we live our day-to-day lives and make decisions.

A New Year is Coming: What Should We Do?

December 2021

(Spoiler alert: I talk about the plot of the new Christmas special, *Snoopy Presents: For Auld Lang Syne*.)

We love watching Christmas shows and movies in our home. Naturally, we were excited to learn about the new Christmas special, *Snoopy Presents: For Auld Lang Syne*. The other night, my nine-year-old and I sat down to watch the original Peanuts Christmas special, followed by the new one.

While it is a Christmas special, the focus shifts to New Year's after their grandmother cancels her trip to see Lucy and Linus for Christmas. Bummed out and feeling unloved because of this news, Lucy creates a New Year's Eve party to celebrate with friends. It turns out to be the distraction she needs in the absence of her grandmother.

Earlier in the episode and in typical fashion, Charlie Brown is worried. Doing what he often does when worried, he visits Lucy at her advice booth. Turns out, he is running out of time to accomplish any of his New Year's resolutions. In stark irony given her own sense of feeling unloved, Lucy helps him see that his list could be much less ambitious and more reasonable.

Like so many of us as we approach a new year, Charlie Brown wants to know what he should do. Lucy is contemplating this question, too, when she dreams up her New Year's Eve party. This same question shows up for Christians as we prepare for Christmas.

Christians are currently in the season of Advent, when we wait and prepare for the coming of Christ. One of the prominent figures in Advent Scripture texts is John the Baptist, who was often mistaken for the messiah. Instead, John was sent to prepare the way and the crowds for Jesus and his ministry.

In the third chapter of the Gospel of Luke, crowds were coming to be baptized by John. But he rebuked them and told them they should bear fruit worthy of repentance. To get clarity on this, they asked him, “What should we do?” The crowds—tax collectors, soldiers—all asked him this question, and he told them, respectively: Share your clothing and food, collect no more than you are authorized, and don’t cheat or harass anyone (author’s paraphrase).

’Tis the season for switching over the calendar to a new year. Many of us will make resolutions for 2022. At the very least, most of us will spend a moment thinking back to all that was done and left undone in 2021—and to the promise that 2022 holds. The question before us is, “What should we do?”

Lucy’s obsession with being loved at her party gets in the way with too many rules and guidelines for her guests, and it all falls apart. When Charlie Brown finds out this was all about her feeling unloved, he organizes a post-midnight celebration with her friends who had abandoned the party. She is overwhelmed by his generosity but mostly by his friendship.

Linus reveals Lucy’s feelings to Charlie Brown in a touching scene where he unpacks the old New Year’s hymn, “For Auld Lang Syne.” He tells Charlie Brown the song has deep meaning: “Should auld acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind.” As one year turns into the next, he says, “Auld Lang Syne” is our reminder that we should never forget our friends. Hopefully they will remember us, too.

Linus inspires once again in a Christmas episode, and Charlie Brown responds to the question “What should we do?” by gathering them all together and reminding Lucy that she is enough just as she is. She is loved.

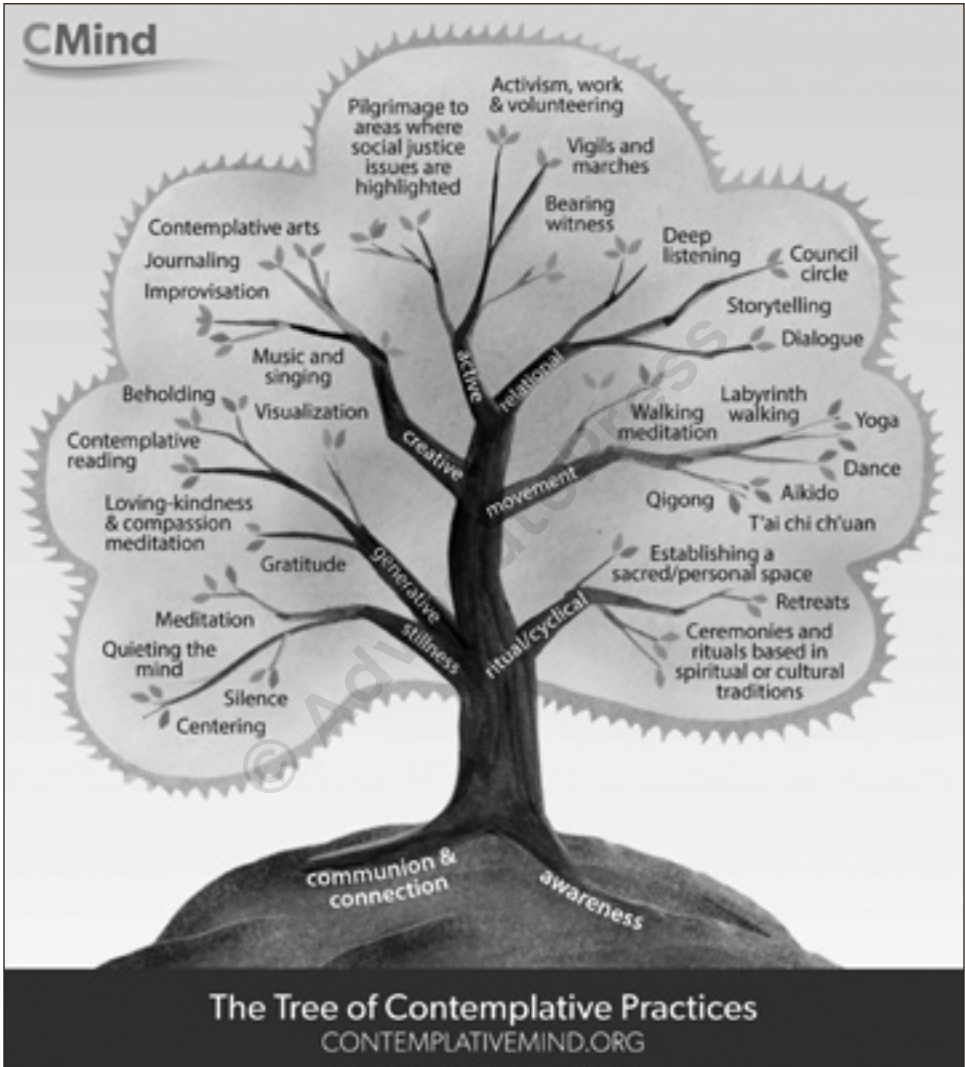
After a rousing rendition of “Auld Lang Syne,” the episode ends with Lucy showing a piece of paper and pencil in front of Charlie Brown. “Here, write this down: ‘Be a good friend,’” she tells him. Charlie Brown writes it down, and Lucy demands he then cross it off. So he does.

“You may not have completed any resolutions last year,” she says, “but you’re already covered for this year.”

What should we do? Share your clothing and food. Collect no more than you are authorized. Don’t cheat or harass anyone. Friends, you are enough, and you are loved. Now, spread that message. Cheers to 2022!

Contemplative Practices—Stillness

As you engage the practices in each season, I encourage you to spend a moment



The Tree of Contemplative Practices, from The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society.

with The Tree of Contemplative Practices, on the next page. Each branch contains a grouping of practices, and during Advent I have chosen to focus on the practices related to stillness: mediation, quieting the mind, silence, and centering.

Advent is a hushed season that begs us to slow down and wait and watch with wonder. We wait for the day of the Lord, as Christ comes to us again and again, especially as the busyness of what Christmas Day so often brings to our life—getting ready for the presents, parties, food, family gatherings during our already-busy lives of obligations related to family, work, school, and other demands.

Stillness practices call us to be still and present. As the psalmist reminds us of how we might encounter God, “Be still, and know that I am God.”⁵

These are not easy practices as I am reminded often when I lead workshops on contemplative practices. People talk about how hard this branch of the tree is to embody, and when they do, they are quite restless in the silence. Short practices of silence are much easier to start with rather than anything lengthy. And they can take place anywhere and at any time—your office chair, in a park, in a sacred space, or maybe even while you are stuck in traffic.

Another way to embody this group of practices is through breath prayers, a kind of meditation. Breath prayers are short sayings or mantras that become a prayer one focuses on during a certain period. A few years ago, a friend of mine used breath prayers in a daily Lenten devotional where sometimes the prayer consisted of words from the Scripture for the day or something that reflected on what they had written in the devotional. These phrases should be short, and you may find them from a daily devotional, Scripture reading, or even a phrase that woke you in the middle of the night.

Take a moment to read through the devotions above again. Are there three to five words you could piece together that could become your breath prayer for the day? Or is there a short phrase that stood out to you? Something you can say and pray in a breath or two that bring you back to the center with God throughout your day?

5. Ps. 46:10 (NIV).



Becky Stein

About the Author

Originally from Pacolet, South Carolina, the Reverend Dr. Lyn Pace has been the college chaplain at Oxford College of Emory University since 2009. He is an ordained elder in the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church and a 1999 graduate of Wofford College. He earned his Master of Divinity from Candler School of Theology in 2002 and completed his Doctor of Ministry there in 2017.

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Lyn is married to Ami Hernández, and they have one child, Sam (10). They make their home in Oxford, Georgia. He enjoys music of all kinds but especially going to Jimmy Buffett concerts. He's an avid reader, runner, and lover of good food, especially when it involves gathering family, friends, and neighbors around the table.

A liturgical perspective on time

"I'm out of time." "Just in time." "I have no time." In our fast-paced, earthly world, time often manages us, whether through a clock, a calendar, or any number of other ways. But what if there were another way, a more spiritual and sacred way, to consider time?

In this book, the Reverend Dr. Lyn Pace explores how the Christian liturgical calendar can be another way for us to keep time—sacred time. Combining the major seasons of the liturgical year with contemplative practices that connect to that season, Lyn invites you to discover a new way to look at time that helps you live with deeper intention and connection.



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