

Taken together, the seasons of Advent and Christmas highlight a spiritual tension, insisting that the divine is intimately present in our lives even though, at times, we sense only absence and yearning. This tension can draw us to look deeper at life; to see that “that which is most sacred” intermingles, often unnoticed, with even the most disturbing aspects of life.

What might this look like?

Just watching the news these days can be overwhelming. We are bombarded with images of war, senseless acts of violence, families facing financial struggles, people struggling to survive on the streets, rivers choked by pollution, forests stripped of biodiversity, and communities devastated by the impacts of climate change.

For people of faith, it begs the question: What is Love doing here?

We yearn for signs of hope, hints of new life, possibilities for transformation.

Consider this:

- While so many fall into polarized thinking about the violence in Israel and Gaza, there are Israelis, Gazans, and many others who refuse such simplistic thinking and, in so doing, can pull others to a higher consciousness; to a level of consciousness that is able to hold the fullness of reality and be the source of real change. These are sacred energies to which the world is urging us to be attentive.
- The Governor of the Bank of Canada, Tiff Macklem, began his fight against rising inflation by advising workers not to ask for too much in wage gains, even though real wages have been falling and workers’ share of GDP has shrunk. It was putting the pain of fighting inflation squarely on the backs of workers.



More recently, the Bank of Canada seems to be paying attention to those economists who have argued that, during this inflationary period, it is corporate profits that have surged to record levels, not wages. In a recent speech, Macklem acknowledge corporate profit-making as a concern. It’s an example of how dialogue in the public square, when done well, with reasonableness and respect, can be a space for transformation. To this point, Finance Minister Freeland recently called for more competition in the grocery sector.

- With climate change, the shifts the world needs are often slow and tentative. But, in a public space with such deep resistance to change, each small step

achieved by climate diplomacy might be understood as grace. For instance, last year, the annual United Nations climate talks ended with a landmark agreement for wealthy countries compensate countries in the Global South for destruction from climate disasters. But this Loss and Damage fund lacked detail, including which countries and financial institutions would

contribute. More recently, key details have been negotiated and global leaders will be asked to ratify the plan at COP 28. This marks a pivotal point in the struggle to get rich countries to compensate poorer countries for recovery and rebuild. The amount of the fund won’t be anywhere near enough, but it is one more small step into global solidarity.

Together, Advent and Christmas call us to seek God’s transforming presence among us. Where are some of the places you see possibilities for hope, new life, and transformation? How can you contribute to the change?