

Blessed Advent! The Southeast Michigan Synod is pleased to announce that Pr. Sarah Mayer-Flatt has agreed to take on the role of "Synod Storyteller."

In this role, Pr. Sarah will share stories of her own, as well as stories that are part of our shared life in southeast Michigan. You can look for them in synod publications coming in the new year.

You are welcome to quote from her stories, share them friends, or put them in your church newsletter. Please remember to give Pr. Sarah credit if you do so:

*"Take a Seat" (article title; this one is "Advent Matters")  
Rev. Sarah Mayer-Flatt*

I am grateful to be able to share this gift with you.

Bishop Don Kreiss

## **Take a Seat:** *Advent Matters*

Advent is often seen as the season of preparation and waiting. This church season is counter-cultural to the hustle and bustle of the urgency of the commercial season. We are called to prepare our hearts for the newborn King all while being bombarded by the individualistic messages of "more, More, MORE!"

But Advent is about more than patience and waiting for Christmas Eve, it's about the power of the incarnation, in which the Word of God - the same Word that brought all things into being- came from the heavens, puts on flesh, and dwells among and in us. Dr. Amy Kenny, in *My Body is Not a Prayer Request*, writes: "Our theology is incarnational because bodies matter."\* Advent is the season of the church year during which we remember God's embodiment not only for us, but with us. Advent is the season in which "Our bodies matter. If they didn't, why would Jesus bother with the incarnation?"

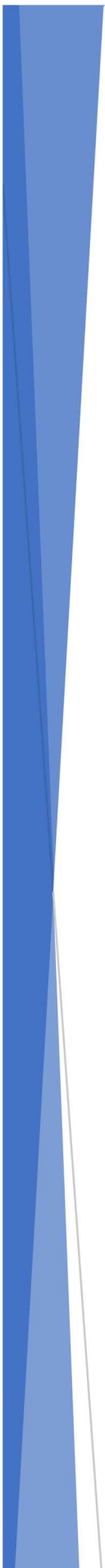
We as preachers know how messy that first Christmas would have been -- without the bells and whistles of modern medicine. Mary, a teenager, would have grunted and cried her way through labor, alone. There would have been childbirth related bodily fluids mixed in with the muck and grit of a home for 1st century Palestinian animals. But attempting to get this message across is less important than reminding our flocks that it is our bodies which matter -- the same bodies that grunt and groan, bleed and crack, weep and stink.

Those bodies -- our bodies -- which also hold the promises of God's redemptive and restoring love, will break eventually. Some with age, others from disease or accidents, but our holy vessels will fail us, and that matters, too.

What if this Advent season we shift our focus from the reality that we try too hard to put meaning into words when all we must remember is that The Word became Flesh?

Think of the relief that message may bring. Our disabled and temporarily-able bodied bodies matter to God. Because, as Kenny also writes: "To say that it doesn't matter if I am disabled is to dismiss the incarnation." For God to put on skin in the name of Jesus meant taking on ALL of the experiences of being human: the colds and scraped knees, the parties and funerals, praise and rejection, and moving from temporarily able-bodied to disabled on the cross.

My immovable legs are as much part of God in flesh as my neighbor's neurodiversity. In each and every one of the moments we live through, in each and every one of our lives, God comes to dwell with and within us. The beloved in your midst who now need assistive devices to hear, or see, or walk might need to experience God afresh this Advent.



Hiding behind the things that make us different, and even may be seen as a challenge, is not what the God of all Creation desires for God's people. We have confidence in this new truth because we believe in the Incarnation. Perhaps a shift in focusing on how GOOD our bodies are, rather than how impatient we can be, could be a new vision for the new creation we encounter in this season of the church.

Shalom,  
Rev. Sarah Mayer-Flatt

\*The quotations are taken from Dr. Amy Kenny's book, "My Body is Not a Prayer Request."