

Sermon: **“Be Still and Know that God is With You”** by Pastor Chris Eng
Lectionary Text: Matthew 1: 18 - 25, N.R.S.V.
4th Sunday of Advent, December 21, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.
Kailua Christian Church UCC

The season of Advent that includes the 4 Sundays before Christmas is always special. As Christians, we prepare to celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus and we also are reminded of the Second Coming of Christ. We sing, “O come, O come, Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel, That mourns in lonely exile here, Until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel. Shall come to thee O Israel!” (Pilgrim Hymnal, page 110). Today’s Scripture from Matthew says that “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel”, which means *‘God is with us.’*”

Churches where I have served, know that I love Psalm 46: 10 which read, **“Be still and know that I am God.”** I’ve often found a bell or gong to ring during *“The Time of Centering”* at the beginning of the worship service. We are invited to *“be still”* and in this stillness and silence, we can know who God is. Joseph named the newborn child, Jesus because he would save people from their sins. Yet, here, the name should have been Emmanuel. But we know that Jesus was not only a human being but also God. And as God, he is with us. But today, I want to explore the times and situations when God is not with us or when we don’t experience God’s presence.

Most who enter a sanctuary like this one or attend a worship service which could be in the mountains or along the shores of a beach, expect to experience God. If this has been your experience, you might recall leaving this worship with disappointment and perhaps even sadness. Perhaps we need to have faith that eventually God will be with us in our lives.

When we or someone we care about experiences a crisis, a major challenge, or what may seem like a tragedy, we may get down on our knees and pray. We may reach out to a pastor, minister or chaplain and ask them to pray. Here at KCC, this can be done during this worship service and sometimes you call the church office to have a name added to the Prayer List in the bulletin or newsletter that is mailed. But very often in prayer, we do not receive an answer right away and it seems as if God does not hear our prayers.

The holidays are usually a happy and joyful time. We associate it with getting together with family and friends, sharing food together and sometimes exchanging gifts. But here’s an interesting thought: even when we are experiencing good things in our lives, when we might consider ourselves blessed, we may not even think about God and in those moments it seems as if God is not present unless we wake up or someone tells us, this comes from the Lord.

Conclusion: When we do not experience the presence of God, we may say that God is not with us. In a parallel way, if we think back to a difficult time in our lives, we may say to someone in our family or a friend, *“You were not with me while I was going through my challenging time.”* On the other hand, we all know when someone has taken the time to be with us when we needed a helping hand, a shoulder to cry on, or someone with an empathetic heart. Sometimes the Lord will use a person like you or me to be *“the presence of God”* to someone going through a depression or experiencing a great loss. The joy of Christmas from Matthew 1 is that God comes to us in the birth of Mary’s son who was to be named “Emmanuel” but ends up with the name “Jesus” because he will save us from our sins! And whether we believe it or not, Jesus is with us as we go through our lives!