



## A Word from Kelsie

My first Christmas in the Gloucester house with my three new roommates was an emotional one. We clung to Advent for different reasons, but we all needed a little hope to enter the bleakness of the season. After some debate about whether we were breaking our lease by getting a live tree, we went to Ace Hardware. We tied our tree with decorative twine to Corinne's car and prayed it would stay in place till we got home. We didn't have much to decorate our tree; I pulled out my small box of decorations looking for something we could add. All I found was a box of decorative Easter eggs my grandmother gave me years ago. We laughed as we hung them from our tree. Corinne added a few ornaments but the tree glistened with pastel eggs. Through the coming weeks, sitting in the near dark gazing at the tree, I contemplated the appropriateness of these eggs. In a new way, I understood how insignificant Christmas is without Easter.

Now with joy each Advent season, I hang these old Easter eggs with purpose. I remember anew the importance of holding Christmas in one hand and Easter in the other. I remember in the darkness of this season the work Christ finished. We are living in a place of not yet. Joy and suffering create a paradox that gives us hope. It overwhelms the darkness of the season and provides the strength to fight for life.

Isaiah 35:3-4 says,

"Strengthen the feeble hands,  
steady the knees that give way;  
say to those with fearful hearts,  
"Be strong, do not fear;  
your God will come,  
he will come with vengeance;  
with divine retribution  
he will come to save you."

As a teacher, I fight for life: I strive for joy and love in the relationships with my students and coworkers. The stories of suffering I listen to every day fill my heart with longing for something more, something other than this broken world. In this season, I am forced to look beyond my present circumstances to remember this is not my home. I am a refugee longing for the rest that Christ has already prepared, an end to suffering. This is my identity. This realization brings both joy and pain as I must continue to fight the darkness waiting for Christ's promised rest.

Verse 10 concludes with,

"They will enter Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy will crown their heads.  
Gladness and joy will overtake them,  
and sorrow and sighing will flee away."

This season of Advent is an intentional time of waiting for Christ's return and for the restoration of order to the world. The end to suffering and the promise of eternal joy. With joy each Christmas season, I will place Easter eggs on my tree as a reminder of the hidden realities of this world. This is not my home; Christ's work is finished.