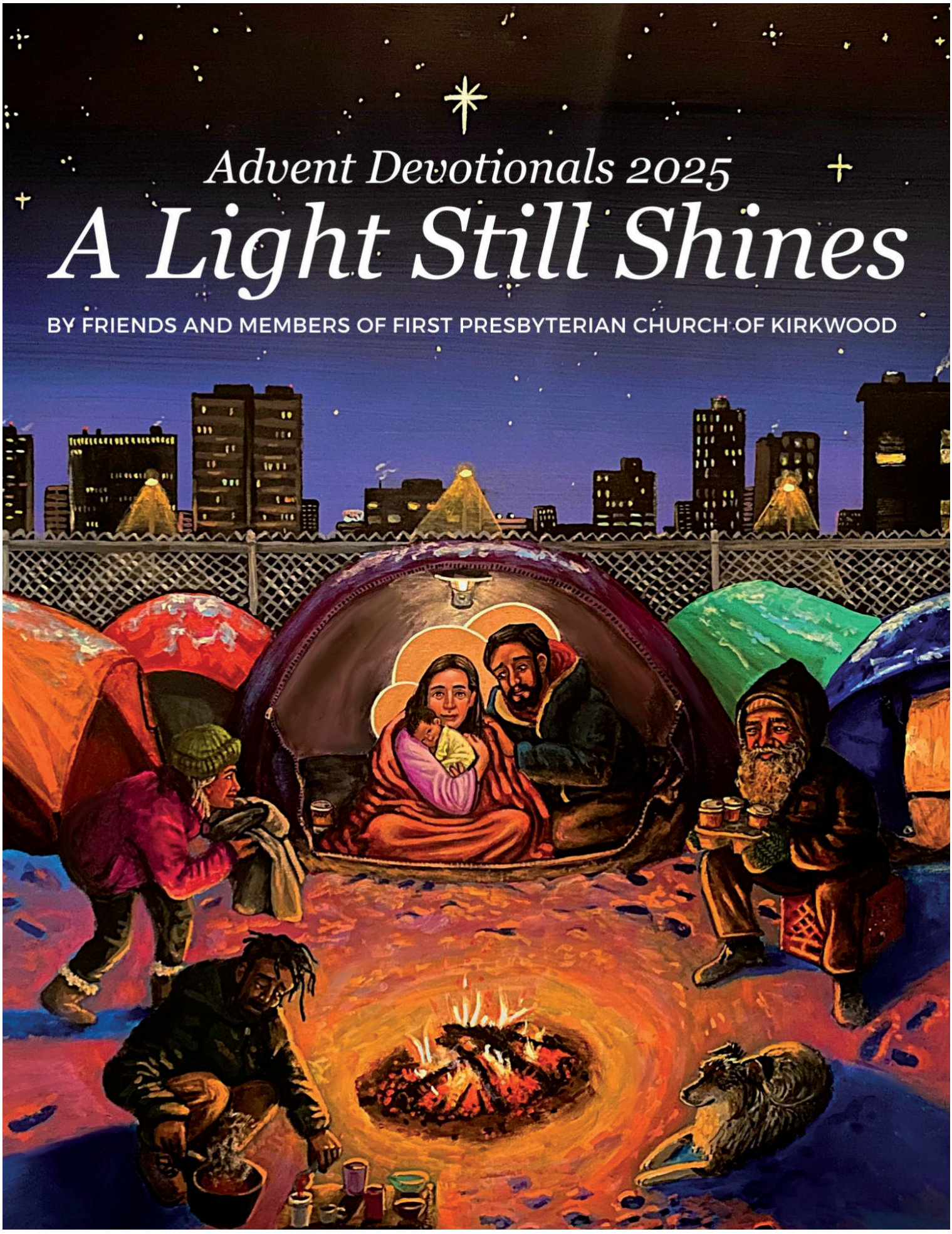
Advent Devotionals 2025
A Light Still Shines
BY FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF KIRKWOOD

November 30th by Wanda Ware

25 "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." 29 Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 34 "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, 35 like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place and to stand before the Son of Man."

Luke 21:25-36

Jesus speaks of signs in the heavens - what does hope look like when the world feels uncertain?

Jesus speaks of extraordinary signs in the heavens and on earth, causing fear and confusion among nations. He describes the coming of the Son of Man with great power and glory. Using the parable of the fig tree, He teaches that just as budding trees signal the nearness of summer, these signs show that God's Kingdom is near. Jesus urges listeners to stay alert, avoid being distracted or weighed down by daily concerns. Pray for the strength to endure what is coming so that they may stand before the Son of Man.

During Advent, we receive daily reflections that feed our soul. Let us not take on the world and its problems, but focus on the goodness of God and rest assured that there is a higher power that is in control. A star shines its brightest in the darkness.

December 1st by Irina and Pat Dawson

18 Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. 19 I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. 20 The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, 21 the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

Isaiah 43:18-21

How can we be more perceptive of the new things that God is bringing forth in the world?

When we read Isaiah 43:18-21, we are reminded that God is here, in our lives, every day, and is bringing forth new things in the world. The question is: do we recognize the things that God brings to the world every day? Or are we distracted?

Do material things, unnecessary endless commitments, so much noise and information that comes from different sources really matter? No, this is a distraction from seeing and feeling God and connecting with our Creator. In order to re-establish this connection, we need to focus our attention on the values of our faith, our family and friendships. Several ways in which we can do this are being more present when we are at church, when we pray to God at home, when we go outside and seek God's gifts in nature, or when we spend quality time with our own children and extended family. Think of simple things you can do together such as reading, playing board games, going on a hike or cooking and enjoying a meal together, without rushing or getting distracted with cell phones or screens.

Advent is such a wonderful opportunity to re-prioritize our time on the things that really matter and to take actions around what God values. This is an opportunity to slow down, to appreciate the time spent with the people we love, and to open our hearts and minds to the new things God is bringing into our lives and in this world.

December 2nd by The Butler Family

1 To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. 2 O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. 3 Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. 4 Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. 5 Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. 6 Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. 7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord! 8 Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. 9 He leads the humble in what is right and teaches the humble his way. 10 All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

Psalm 25:1-10

Where do you place your trust in seasons of waiting?

Our feelings of stress and isolation in these times might stem from very different sources than what David was facing here, but just like David, we can trust that God has a plan.

We are reminded of the secular question: "Do you believe in fate?" We would respond: "We believe in God's plan." Fate, as it might be described, is random and subjective, conceived for no great purpose. God's plan is a path forged by His steadfast love and unending grace, for a true and higher purpose.

Is it cliché to say: "Let go and let God"? Not really. Does that mean we do nothing? Also, not really. It means that we remain open to God's suggestions, nudges, or callings, letting Him "instruct us as sinners" along the way, while trusting that God has a plan and His plan will ultimately be achieved. Will that way, that path, be clear and obvious? Again, not really. But will He show us that path, bit by bit, in due time? Absolutely! And do we seek to follow that path, with faithfulness, and humility, open to His call, trusting in His steadfast love? Absolutely!

By His plan, on His path, we will be led out of temptation and delivered from evil.

We will wait calmly. We will listen humbly.

God is cool. God has a plan.

December 3rd by Maria Kukla

11 Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; 12 the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; 13 let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Romans 13:11-14

What does spiritual wakefulness mean to you this Advent?

The overall theme for these Advent Devotionals is "A Light Shall Shine".

In these verses from Romans, Paul urges us out of our sleepiness (darkness) and into wakefulness (light) realizing that life is short and so is this season of Advent. We must use our time as believers and gravitate towards the light which is Christ Jesus.

The days are shorter now and the darkness has lengthened. This may be true not just in our daily hours as it relates to the clock and seasons but also in the climate of our time. There is decidedly an abundance of strife and hardships for our country right now. But as in any good story there is also the opposing view which in this case, is one of lightness and love.

Paul, in these passages from Romans, challenges us to wake up from our spiritual sleepiness and put on the armor of light. This armor will protect us against the darkness of our time and the darkness that can sometimes be in our hearts. Paul urges us to turn back to Jesus who protects us and provides for us even in these darker days of autumn and winter. Jesus provides the light that we must allow to shine in us and through us to our friends, family, church and indeed the entire world.

"Dear Father, protect us from the darkness in the world and in our lives by providing us with your armor of love and light. Wake us up and allow this light and love to shine outward from us and into the world especially during this season of Advent" AMEN

December 4th by Ann Bronson

36 "But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son,
but only the Father. 37 For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of
Man. 38 For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and
giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, 39 and they knew nothing until the
flood came and swept them all away, so, too, will be the coming of the Son of Man. 40
Then two will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. 41 Two women will be
grinding meal together; one will be taken, and one will be left. 42 Keep awake, therefore,
for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. 43 But understand this: if the
owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would
have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 Therefore you
also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Matthew 24:36-44

How can we live each day as if Christ might come today?

"Like a thief in the night!" No one wants to experience confronting a thief in your house in the middle of the night. Your first response is to protect your family. That protection might include an alarm system, certainly calling the police, and trying to stay calm until help arrives. You will not know the day or time a thief visits, but hope you are prepared, as best you can, to protect your home and your family. Do you think most people have a plan if this type of event happens to them? Or do you just hope that thief never finds your house?

Being prepared and just hoping nothing happens are two very different approaches. In our scripture, God reminds us of Christ's second coming and that no one knows the day or hour of Christ's return. Not even the angels, nor the Son—only the Father. God's words aren't meant to scare us, but to wake us up to the urgency of being prepared—being ready.

You may think you have time to prepare for Christ's coming—to apologize, to do unto others, to forgive, to love more. But the truth is, every moment is uncertain and should be appreciated. The people just hoping that thieves never come are going about their daily routines, unaware of what might be coming, until you hear that unfamiliar noise in the night. God wants you to be prepared for Christ's second coming-- not paranoia, but spiritual alertness and resolve.

Are you living the kind of life you would be glad for Him to find you living? Are you prepared by living a life centered on Jesus—walking closely with Jesus every day? Jesus asks you to remain faithful and be ready for Christ. By doing this, His return will not surprise you. You will be living in His presence every day.

To live as if Christ might come today means letting His teachings shape your everyday priorities. It means choosing grace over hate, integrity over apathy, and generosity over wellbeing. Christ's return, whenever it happens, won't catch you off guard if you've already welcomed Him into each day.

So today, let's prepare. Live life aware and ready for the unexpected. Be prepared as if eternity could begin today—because it could. Every moment of preparedness by living for Him is a rehearsal for the day He comes again.

December 5th by Bill Stein

1 O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains
would quake at your presence—2 as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes
water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations
might tremble at your presence! 3 When you did awesome deeds that we did not
expect, you came down; the mountains quaked at your presence. 4 From ages past no
one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who
works for those who wait for him. 5 You meet those who gladly do right, those who
remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid
yourself we transgressed. 6 We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our
righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the
wind, take us away. 7 There is no one who calls on your name or attempts to take hold
of you, for you have hidden your face from us and have delivered us into the hand of
our iniquity. 8 Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand. 9 Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not
remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Isaiah 64:1-9

When have you cried out for God to act?

"O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!" (Isaiah 64: 1)

The Old Testament book of Isaiah is rife with dramatic imagery. When it was written, war and social injustice was a part of everyday life for many, as was the longing for a Messiah, someone to show up and make it all better. Some things never change.

Those in Isaiah's age were so desperate for the foretold Messiah to come, so anxious for God to intervene, they wanted God to literally 'tear open the heavens' and come to earth. I cannot imagine the desperation the people of that time felt.

How often have we begged God to intercede in a situation, or to answer a long-held prayer? If only God would get involved and fix this mess, all would be well, right? What is God waiting for? What is God doing up there, while we suffer and face a life filled with fear, uncertainty, and evil? Do we, as did the people of Isaiah's time, expect God to tear heaven open and come down to earth with a blare of trumpets?

Friends, God did come down, but not in the way we expected. There was no apocalyptic-style return, but in a quiet, humble stable in the middle of the night, God came to earth to redeem, save, and love. The heavens opened when the angels announced the Messiah's birth to the shepherds, but the arrival itself was an ordinary human event.

In those times we have cried out for God to act, to hear, to respond, do we really want a vengeful deity to come sweeping in? Perhaps we need to look for God and God's answer in the quiet actions and words of others. More importantly, I believe God answers prayers through us when we do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly. May we as a congregation embrace these virtues on our Advent journey.

December 6th by George Durnell

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, 5 for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— 6 just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. 8 He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the partnership of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

How do you see God's faithfulness sustaining you?

For those of us in the United States, Advent comes shortly after the cherished holiday of Thanksgiving. This seems a natural progression — the expression of gratitude to God for the bounty of the harvest and God's blessings to us in the past year flows sweetly into the anticipation of the blessings to come with the birth of the Savior.

In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul is thankful for God's ongoing presence in the lives of the Corinthians, so that they have all they require to know Jesus Christ. And he reminds them that God will remain with them throughout their lives and even beyond, until the end. This is the promise of Advent: the appearance of Jesus brings the continuous presence of the loving God in the daily living of Christians.

In our troubled times, it may seem difficult to believe in God's faithfulness in the face of the turmoil and uncertainties we encounter every single day. Advent gives us the opportunity to be patient, to stop worrying, to trust that we, like those Corinthians, do indeed have everything we need. And so we wait, we count each day, and we open ourselves to the coming of God's holy spirit.

Sunday, December 7th by Megan Ligeti

*1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor
of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of
Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of
Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3
He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for
the forgiveness of sins, 4 as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,
"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his
paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made
low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, 6 and all
flesh shall see the salvation of God.' "*

Luke 3:1-6

John cries out in the wilderness - what wildernesses in your life are calling for peace?

Reading this passage about John the Baptist crying out, I keep asking, "What wildernesses in our life are calling for peace?" My first instinct is to answer, half-jokingly, "What part of life ISN'T?"

I recently called my parents to check in. We often land on opposite sides of political conversations, but I asked if they could remember a time that felt this fraught. They said, "Vietnam and the race riots. We've been through times like this before, and we'll get through this too." There's something grounding in that reminder. Humanity has walked through chaos before, and light has broken through again.

Perhaps that's what John offers from the wilderness…an invitation to remember that even in barren, weary places, God is still preparing something new. I'm reminded of Psalm 78, where the Israelites ask, "Can God spread a table in the wilderness?" Even in their doubt, God provides manna, quail, and water from the rock.

The other night felt like one of these wilderness moments. The kids were melting down in the car, I was exhausted, and the tension was rising. Then one of them asked to play "Defying Gravity." Within seconds, the mood shifted. We were singing along—loudly, dramatically, and (some of us) completely off-key. The car that had felt like a trap of frustration was suddenly bursting with laughter. Perhaps this is what peace looks like up close: not the absence of conflict, but the transformation of it.
Maybe peace begins right where we least expect it: in the middle of our fatigue, our anxieties, our everyday mess. Maybe it starts when we notice the small glimmers—the comforting words of a parent, the song, the laughter—and trust that even here, God is preparing the way.

Prayer: God of the wilderness, help us find the peace already flickering even in unexpected places.

December 8th by Cecil Wood

3 I thank my God for every remembrance of you, 4 always in every one of my prayers for all of you, praying with joy 5 for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. 7 It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I hold you in my heart, for all of you are my partners in God's grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 8 For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the tender affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight 10 to help you to determine what really matters, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, 11 having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:3-11

What work is God leading you to in this Advent season?

I am awed by the magnanimous expression of love and caring that Paul reveals for the church at Philippi. This is the result of the "good work" that was begun there—a partnership in God's grace that has sustained Paul during his imprisonment and as he preached and defended the gospel.

This boosting of confidence, this sharing of love and concern for one another, is an essential part of our fellowship as members of the body of Christ. Paul stresses its importance as he prays that the church may continue to demonstrate the profound love about which he speaks. Such love and caring leads to "knowledge and full insight"; it helps us as Christians "to determine what really matters", and to produce a harvest of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God". It is that kind of love, that sense of partnership that we experience in our congregation.

So, as we wait during this time of Advent, even as everything around us seems to be in turmoil, may we find comfort in our partnership with one another and continue our good work to produce a harvest of righteousness.

But what is that "good work"? It is loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind; and spreading his love by loving our neighbor as ourself. Paul gives us some helpful examples in Romans 12: 6-9: `So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. 7 If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. 8 If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly. 9 Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them.

May this Advent be a reminder that God has begun a "good work" in each of us, with the assurance that he will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

December 9th by Sherry Peters

1 See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. 2 But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like washers' soap; 3 he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. 4 Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old and as in former years.

Malachi 3:1-4

The messenger comes to refine and purify. How might God be refining your heart this season?

I am in a stage of life where so many things keep me busy, and my mind is always thinking about the next thing on the list or the many responsibilities I have as a wife, mother, preschool director, daughter, and friend. And at this time of year, I often find myself lost in the "to-do's" of the season rather than the beauty and the meaning of Christmas.

This passage speaks about God sending His messenger to prepare the way. For me, His messengers are the children I work with every day. During this time of year, they are filled with happiness, wonder, pure joy, and excitement. They are unaware and unconcerned of the many tasks that come along with this season and become the mistaken focus for many like me.

I am a firm believer that God often speaks to us through others, especially when our brains are too busy to hear His voice. To me, young children are living examples of God's pure love, and the way in which He wants us all to love one another. Through their eyes I see that sometimes the most important things are as simple as being present in the moment and enjoying the company of those you care about. I am fortunate that I get that reminder from them every year because of the work that I do.

I'd like to think that I can completely let go of all of the lists and to-do's, but I know that isn't practical. So this Christmas season, I am going to add "be joyful", "be loving", "be excited", "be filled with wonder" to my to-do list so that I can at least try to be a little more like God's little messengers.

December 10th by Lucy Tidwell

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. 69 He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his child David, 70 as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, 71 that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. 72 Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors and has remembered his holy covenant, 73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us 74 that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness in his presence all our days. 76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, 77 to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. 78 Because of the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, 79 to shine upon those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Luke 1:68-79

What new dawn do you hope to see?

This passage begins with prophetic words of a joyous new father, Zechariah, heralding the birth of his own, long-awaited son. Elizabeth and Zechariah's hopes for such a son had long been stalled, if not forgotten. Zechariah foretells that this son, John, will prepare us all for the arrival of our "mighty savior". The beautiful ending of the passage promises that God will be with us during this difficult waiting period of darkness. I love the reassurance of our God's "tender mercy" and the powerful imagery of the dawn breaking through the darkness to give light to all of us who sit in the darkness and in the shadow of death….."

Yet, my attention is also drawn to words in the middle of the passage—between Zechariah's joy at the beginning of the passage and the powerful hope offered at the end of the passage. Zechariah says that we receive God's mercy so that we might "serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness…" God's mercy is calling us to serve in the midst of the joy and of the desperate hope, turning our hearts outward to others. Perhaps God also knows that us serving is what will help "the dawn from on high break upon us."

December 11th by Hannah Nepple

1 Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. 3 A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 5 Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." 6 A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass;their constancy is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers; the flower fades, [[when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers; the flower fades,]] but the word of our God will stand forever. 9 Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" 10 See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him and his recompense before him. 11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom and gently lead the mother sheep.

Isaiah 40:1-11

How can you offer comfort to someone who needs it today?

Placing a can of stew in the Little Pantry; Helping a neighbor carry in their groceries; Driving someone to an appointment; Giving a friend a hug. Sometimes the smallest gestures can make the largest impact. Comfort can come from a helping hand, a shoulder to lean on, or even a smile. Like Jesus taught us, it's picking someone up when they fall. There are numerous ways to provide comfort, my favorites seem to be through help and hugs. Times of receiving comfort or providing comfort leave a meaningful impact on those involved.

I have a lot of memories over the past few years of providing comfort through our church's high school Work Camp mission trip. The two weeks of Work Camp, each year, overflow with opportunities to provide comfort. I have great memories of our service, including moving people into new homes, sorting food to distribute it out to those in need, and many other things to help people. Specifically, I remember during freshman year, I worked hard all day with my class to clean out a house and set it up for an immigrant family to arrive that night. The whole day I was working for the family, for their comfort, to show them we care and God cares. I didn't get to see them move into the house, but I can only imagine the comfort they felt to have a new home and to know the community around them cares so much for them. We all have more opportunities than we realize to provide comfort to those we interact with every day. Let this be a season of spreading comfort to those in our community.

December 12th by Rob Monroe

1 Lord, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. 2 You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin. Selah 3 You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger. 4 Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us. 5 Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations? 6 Will you not revive us again, so that your people may rejoice in you? 7 Show us your steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation. 8 Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. 9 Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. 10 Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. 11 Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. 12 The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. 13 Righteousness will go before him and will make a path for his steps.

Psalm 85:1-13

Where have you glimpsed peace and reconciliation today?

Verses 1-2 (The Message)
God, you smiled on your good earth! You brought good times back to Jacob! You lifted the cloud of guilt from your people, you put their sins far out of sight.

As I write this it is mid-November and the office is warmer than we would like and only about 20% of the leaves have fallen from the trees yet. The ginkgo tree in the church lot is holding on for a few more days until it will completely drop everything to ready itself for the season to come. This time of year we like to feel the crisp air; we like things to change in ways that still feel familiar. We like for things around us to signal that the next season is ready to be here. But that is not what we are getting, at least not yet.

The scripture I was given is generally thought to be an appreciation letter from the Psalmist written to God. Sort of. When you read the whole passage you will see that there are a lot more "thank you for this" followed by "but do not forget about that" request from the writer to their Lord. We often make those cries, even today, don't we?

In this season of anticipation for celebrating the birth of Christ I love to look around for things that bring peace without need for follow up "buts" at the next verse. A meal with the family. Walking around and seeing how others have decorated. A visit to a light display of epic proportions.

But mostly I look for peace in silent places like sitting in the glow of our own decorations at home or watching snow fall - not that we will get that during Advent! My favorite place for peace in this season, though, is sitting in the quiet of worship as the service begins and we gather to wait together.

Hope to see you sitting with me in peace in this season.

December 13th by Andy Finken

[8] But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. [9] The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance. [10] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be destroyed with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. [11] Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, [12] waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and destroyed and the elements will melt with fire? [13] But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.[14] Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish, [15] and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,

2 Peter 3:8-15

This passage both terrifies and comforts,

The heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be destroyed with fire…

But then,

While you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish…and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

This talk of the heavens and infinity and cosmic patience as a blessing evokes for me the Buddhist idea of universal continuity. Each one of us is made of and a part of everything in our universe, from our common elemental composition to the food we eat, grown from the nutrients of the land, fed by a star.

Thich Nhat Hahn writes, *There are mountains and rivers, fields and trees. There is sunshine. We are children of light. We are sons and daughters of the sun and stars. The whole cosmos is coming together to support our body in this very moment. Our little human body contains the entire realm of all phenomena…We cannot take the rain out of the flower or the oxygen out of the tree…We cannot take anything out of anything else. We are the mountains and rivers; we are the sun and stars.*

We wait, and are encouraged to be patient. But Peter invites us to think about what we should be doing while we wait, which is, living! Living as if the heavens might be destroyed tomorrow means tending to today, to the people in your present moment. Living intentionally, your life, in the moment, is *the patience of our Lord*, it is everlasting patience, it is, *Salvation.*

December 14th by Joe and Lindsay Marting

10 When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew 2:10-11

How can we pay Christ homage in our own way this Advent season?

In preparation for Advent, our dear friend and prolific poet, the late Ann Weems, penned these words in her poem "In Search of our Kneeling Places". We share this poem in her precious memory:

In each heart lies a Bethlehem,
an inn where we must ultimately answer
whether there is room or not.
When we are Bethlehem-bound
we experience our own advent in his.
When we are Bethlehem bound
we can no longer look the other way
conveniently not seeing stars
not hearing voices.
We can no longer excuse ourselves by busily
tending our sheep or our kingdoms.

This Advent let's go to Bethlehem
and see this thing that the Lord has made known to us. In the midst of shopping sprees
let's ponder in our hearts the Gift of Gifts.
Through the tinsel
let's look for the gold of the Christmas Star.
In the excitement and confusion, in the merry chaos,
let's listen for the brush of angels' wings.
This Advent, let's go to Bethlehem
and find our kneeling places.

Dear Jesus, in humility, devotion, and surrender we pray that you would guide us to our kneeling place this Advent season. Amen.

December 15th by Kevin Chunko

2 Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and will not be afraid, for the Lord is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.” 3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. 4 And you will say on that day: “Give thanks to the Lord; call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted. 5 Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. 6 Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

Isaiah 12:2-6

What gives you joy in your faith right now?

What makes you joyful in this mid-Advent time? For me, choral arts, hymnody, and song have a special place in my life.

Music technically always occurs around us, but the act of music making has always brought me joy. Beyond the technical existence of frequency vibrations, there is a great difference between hearing something casually versus a self-transformative moment in our life. Choral singing and congregational hymnody offer a deeper connection between word and musical sound, weaving them together into a multidimensional experience.

Whether instrumental, hymn, or choral music, I see it like a well: “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation,” Isaiah offers. The joy of God’s salvation is written all over the hymns we sing each week. Take a closer look at the hymns we will sing in worship this month; consider the words you see and sing in the hymnal. Consider that we have all gathered purposefully to worship. We proclaim our faith as a community together, resonating with people all over the world and over past centuries. Even in indigenous societies throughout the world and over the history of humans, communities have and do gather to remember the reason they are tethered together into one people (e.g. “why are we here?). Isaiah provides us a direction to take our song in this Advent season: “And you will say on that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

Folks, welcome to mid-December of 2025, and we are *still* singing and spreading the joy about God’s gift of the Jesus Christ to each of us and to the world.

December 16th by Louisa Wimmer

14 Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! 15 The Lord has taken away the judgments against you; he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. 16 On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. 17 The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing 18 as on a day of festival." I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. 19 I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. 20 At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord.

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Imagine God singing over your life - what song might it be?

While first reflecting on this passage in Zephaniah, I started to conjure images of a God who sings over us. I visualized soft, muted colors, humming tones, and soothing lullabies. I recalled the ways my own mother sang over me as a child in need of comfort and peace—calming me with a few gentle notes. That picture is all good and pleasant, after all God *is* our comforter. But after deeper reflection, I realized that Zephaniah shows us something very different. In this passage we see God in full celebration mode. A God who rejoices and exalts over us with *loud* singing! Not a deity humming soft lullabies to soothe our weary souls, but rather one giddy with delight—seeing His children as fully redeemed and renewed. A God who can't help but combust into uproarious singing, with a bombastic band and some rock-solid, finger-snapping backup singers!

This song of love and rejoicing is everywhere around us: in all shapes and sizes, in instruments and vocal timbres, found in nature and in human composition. God sings a song of redemption, a song of morning and night, a song of anticipation and a song for this very moment. It is loud. It is boisterous. It will shake the ground, knock your socks off, and make you want to wiggle your hips! This song is infectious, as it turns our heart towards The One who first loved us and plants a tune in our souls.

The next time you hear a loud bird singing, a raucous peal of laughter, an organ postlude that rumbles the pews, or a cacophony of sounds from children running around the church, imagine it is God singing over you. Loud, brazen, over the top, and full of love for *YOU*. A special song for the redeemed, delightful, spunky, loving, and audaciously wonderful child of God that you are.

December 17th by The Meyer Family

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7

How do you practice joy when life feels heavy?

It seems more often than not lately; the world feels extra heavy as we look around. We have so many things to worry about when it comes to the larger picture. Will my neighbors have enough to eat? Will my loved ones be persecuted for whom they choose to love? Will my children be safe in their school? The list of anxieties seems endless and ever changing. So how do we find joy amongst it all? We make the joy. We have to. Because to be happy among the darkness drives away the darkness.

In our home, we turn to where we see the greatest joys and that is our boys. We see the world through their eyes. Children can find joy in the smallest of places, a soccer game, a pizza party, a playdate. If in these small moments they find joy, so can we. We too can have our pizza party but it might be a night with friends or school fundraiser or date night. These moments refill our cups and give us the ability to tolerate the anxieties of the world. We remind ourselves that without these joyful reprieves we cannot continue to move the needle forward.

To each of us finding the joy will look different but simplicity is the key. Joy does not have to be a luxury vacation or shopping spree or gourmet meal. Take a moment to watch a child in your life, notice how easily they find joy, and challenge yourself to do the same. Step outside and feel the sunshine. Have the extra dessert. Schedule the coffee date. Do what makes you happy and don’t feel shame, just as our children do not.

December 18th by Carley Lagemann

1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. 2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." 3 The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. 4 Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses in the Negeb. 5 May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. 6 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

Psalm 126

Where have you seen sorrow turn to hope?

There was a time when sorrow seemed to have the final word. I was struggling to stay sober, weighed down by shame and fear that joy might never return. But slowly, through the quiet patience of my family and the steady love of God, something began to change. Like a seed planted deep in the soil, hope began to grow unseen. Each day of choosing healing over despair was a small act of faith—an act of pushing forward despite the pain and tears

Now, as I look back, I see the harvest God was cultivating all along. The laughter around the Christmas table, the warmth of being truly present with loved ones, the peace that comes with forgiveness—These are the rewards of my struggle, and they make me happy.

Advent reminds me that hope often begins in the dark. The Israelites waited for restoration; we wait for Christ's light to break through our own nights. God's promises are not quick, but they are sure—and in the waiting, He is already at work turning sorrow into joy.

December 19th by Vickie and Rick Jeter

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

This Advent season, how can our faith in Jesus help us to persevere?

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he reduced the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Advent is a season of expectations, new life, of relationships, yet Hebrews 12: 1-2 refers to those lives that preceded ours (the witnesses in Hebrews 11), completed (persevered) the race and received the rewards in the resurrection.

Witnesses are more than observers. The witnesses in our individual races are those that introduce us to the faith (race), those that help train us to know the objective, those that support and encourage us and finally those that celebrate the end of the race with us.

Persevering in the race requires change ("throw off everything that hinders,"} to continue while the objective remains the same. The race is a marathon, not a sprint. We've seen the videos of the marathon runner(s) leaning on other runners as they approached the finish line.

This Advent season let's persevere to clear away distractions so we can welcome the Christ child.

To persevere, we need to acknowledge that we are not by ourselves; there are times when we simply cannot take another step unless supported by someone who is willing to carry you. To persevere, there will be times when we carry someone simply because we can.

December 20th by Rachel Finken

[26] In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called
Nazareth, [27] to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of
David. The virgin's name was Mary. [28] And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored
one! The Lord is with you." [29] But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered
what sort of greeting this might be. [30] The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for
you have found favor with God. [31] And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a
son, and you will name him Jesus. [32] He will be great and will be called the Son of the
Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. [33] He will
reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." [34] Mary
said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" [35] The angel said to her, "The
Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;
therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. [36] And now, your
relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for
her who was said to be barren. [37] For nothing will be impossible with God." [38] Then Mary
said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."
Then the angel departed from her.

Luke 1:26-38

Why is God's good news accompanied by fear?

During Advent, I always experience pangs of what Barbara Brown Taylor calls "holy envy"- that feeling of appreciating, perhaps even envying, something of the way another tradition encounters the divine. Because during Advent, my attention is transfixed on the coming of Jesus, but also on a figure we Protestants don't always talk about as much- Mary.

This passage in particular always renews in me an overwhelming gratitude and awe for this young woman- likely, a teenager- who was brave enough to say "yes" to an invitation that was terrifying. The story is so well known to us- the angel came, told Mary not to be afraid, and then she got pregnant! No big deal, right?

But can you imagine being in her shoes? A young woman, unmarried, in a society where giving birth out of wedlock could lead to intense ostracization and vulnerability, being told that she would conceive the Son of God, the Savior of the world? This could be the end of her marriage, the end of her acceptability in society, the end of life as she knew it. I have to think that Mary was afraid in this moment- otherwise, why would the angel have told her not to be?

And yet, even as she may have been terrified and uncertain of how God's promises would come to fruition, Mary trusted in God, saying, "Let it be with me according to your word." Her very rational fears were accompanied by her trust in divine promise.

I pray that we each may learn a bit from Mary this holiday season. There is much to be afraid of- but like Mary, we can turn towards the better angels among us and say, even through our fears and uncertainties, "yes" to the divine promise of God's breaking into this world.

December 21st by Jeanne Earley

39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, 40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." 46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed, 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name; 50 indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. 54 He has come to the aid of his child Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." 56 And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

Luke 1:39-56

How do we experience God's reversal of status in our lives today?

During the visit of Mary with Elizabeth, Luke uses the words of Isaiah who anticipates the birth of Jesus:

52 *He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.."*

Luke shares the expectations of Isaiah describing Jesus with words, "Lord", "King", and "Mighty One". Were these the titles interpreted hopefully by those seeking freedom from a controlling Roman government? Probably. There is another option for the words "Mighty One" and "Kingdom".

In his lifetime, Jesus provides his followers with model behaviors of living with and providing the might and power for the people He met daily. In Matthew 25, Jesus gives us the challenge to turn to those who are thirsty, imprisoned, food insecure, and without warm clothing. Advent is a time to reflect and discover the ways to care for those we meet in our daily lives.

Whenever I read or hear the simple question. *"What would Jesus do?"*, I admire the simplicity of the question as it allows me to re-center my paths of action. The celebration of the humble birth is a reminder to inquire, accompany and share with our neighbors. I am so thankful for the many ways that our congregation shares our gifts and opportunities to provide meaningful care to our Kirkwood and St. Louis neighbors. The care can include breakfast casseroles, food and utilities to Kirkcare, housewares to Home Sweet Home or Youth mission trips out of town.

My wish for everyone today is that we can celebrate the birth with joy to those in our everyday lives.

December 22nd by Jackie Trottman

[2] But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you
shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from
ancient days. [3] Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor
has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. [4] And
he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the
name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the
ends of the earth, [5] and he shall be the one of peace.

Micah 5:2-5a

How does God's greatness encounter us in surprising places?

I call God the God of Surprises, showing up when we least expect it. He usually comes disguised in small ways. One example was during a "spirited" discussion Robert and I had. We had many of those sitting out on our screened-in porch in the summer of 2020 during the Covid shutdown. Robert was expressing how he so desired to feel God's presence. I knew of a time in his 20's when he had a very profound experience but struggled since then. There was a house being built across the street and the air was filled with loud truck noises, highlighted by one backing up with the obnoxious beep, beep, beep sound. Robert says, "There it is. Did you hear it?" I said, "Hear what? How can you hear anything over the construction???" He said, "That's the little frog I've been hearing." I became very still and listened. Then I heard the sweetest chirp. I said, "It's God!" Robert laughed and I laughed and Robert said, "Maybe this little creature *is* telling us that God created me and I am here." Micah alludes to this smallness when he says, "But you, Bethlehem, David's country, the runt of the litter—From you will come the leader who will shepherd-rule Israel." (The Message). The expectation of the coming Messiah was that of a great warrior to overcome the tyranny of the Roman Empire. Surprise! That didn't happen. Instead, Jesus used God's power for healing, reconciliation, and to provide peace in a world fraught with tyranny and unrest within and without. Today we face many of the same issues of political unrest, social inequities, and all of life's stressors. But through it all we have our Shepherd that cares for us and provides the peace that surpasses all understanding.

For unto us a child is born. And he shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

December 23rd by Tom Edelstein

[20] Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed, [21] nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you."

Luke 17:20-21

What does it mean for Christ and the kingdom to be with among us?

Each year at this time we prepare ourselves to celebrate the birth of Jesus; the presence of Christ among us. This is a historic and theological truth for us.

In the Gospel of Luke, the Pharisees asked Jesus about the coming of the kingdom of God and his response transcended the literal historical intention of the question: just when is this going to happen? How long do we have to wait? Jesus' reply leads us to the theology of the meaning of Christ, that is, God with us. He said, "The kingdom of God is among and within you." (See Luke 17:20-21)

This frames the heart of my Advent reflection and preparation for the annual celebration of Christmas. It reminds me that scripture and faith are meant to be more than something we know and practices that we do. They are a path that has the potential to transform us into being more Christ-like. That is, disposed to being vessels of grace, love, and care for those we meet in person and come to know along the path of our lives. How well can I manifest this truth of our faith in everyday interactions with family, friends, and all we meet? How well can I dispose myself in Christ to reflect God's loving kindness and grace throughout my day? These questions are framing what I think of as the great challenge of Advent and Christmas.

December 24th by Ivy Hartman

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room. 8 Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:

Luke 2:1-10

Where have you heard good news breaking through this year?

Good news can be easy to come by — a son invited to assist with a professor's research, a job offer for our soon-to-be college graduate, or the relief that comes with a hopeful medical diagnosis for Kirk. But *great joy* — the kind that makes your heart swell and your soul sing — that can feel more elusive.

When I think of *great joy*, I often recall births in our family: my sons, my great-nieces, and my niece Harriet — a true gift, born to my sister, a single mother by choice in her 40s. Yet I know not everyone's story includes such moments of joy around birth. So, I'd like to herald *good news of great joy* in another context.

I work with high school students as they plan for life after graduation. My best days are the ones filled with their energy and hope. One afternoon, a student who had faced several college rejections came to meet with me, her face glowing. She shared that she'd been accepted into a year-long study abroad program — one that would let her earn college credits and return to her dream university as a sophomore. As she talked, she kept saying, "I'd rather be poor and happy than rich and unhappy. I just want to travel the world!" Her confidence and joy were radiant — it was clear this opportunity was meant just for her.

That moment reminded me that *great joy* doesn't depend on perfect circumstances — it comes when we recognize God's presence and purpose, breaking through our ordinary lives.

As we herald the coming of Christ, may we pause to feel, share, and truly bask in *great joy*.

December 25th by Gary Noonan

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it. 6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

John 1:1-14

How do you experience God's presence dwelling with you today?

There's a hush to Christmas morning that feels different from any other day of the year. Even if the house is busy, even if there are ripped bits of wrapping paper on the floor and the smell of coffee drifting through the kitchen, there's a kind of quiet underneath it all…a pause, a breath, a reminder that something sacred is happening right here in the midst of ordinary life.

John's Gospel doesn't give us shepherds or angels or a manger. Instead it gives us poetry. 'In the beginning was the Word… and the Word was with God… and the Word was God.' Before anything existed, before stars learned to shine or oceans learned to dance, God was speaking love into being.

And on this day, Christmas Day, John tells us that this eternal Word 'became flesh and lived among us.' The phrase 'lived among us' is literally 'pitched a tent,' as if to say God moved into the neighborhood, not as a guest but as a resident; not above us but beside us.

It can be easy to imagine God as distant or abstract, tucked away somewhere behind the clouds or hidden in theological mysteries. But Christmas pulls God back down to eye level. God chooses skin and bone and heartbeat. God chooses to be held, to be fed, to be taught how to walk. God chooses vulnerability over power, presence over distance.

And maybe that's the quiet magic of this morning: the reminder that God still shows up the same way, not in grand displays but in the fragile, tender corners of our lives. In the laughter around a table. In the memory of someone we miss. In the warmth of a hand held a little longer than usual. In the ache we carry that somehow softens under the promise that we are not alone!

'The Word became flesh.' Love became visible. God became touchable. And in every place where love takes root today, in your home, your conversations, your pauses, your longings, God is dwelling still.

I wish you all a very blessed and peaceful Christmas.

Advent 2025

AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF KIRKWOOD

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Sunday, November 30
First Sunday of Advent
Taste of Advent Begins! Download Flyer at:
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Friday, December 5
Alternative Gift Market 11:15 - 11:45 a.m.

Saturday, December 6
Alternative Gift Market 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Cookie Walk 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Alternative Gift Market 2:00 - 4:30 p.m.
Allegro Choir Concert 3:00 p.m.

Taste of Advent

Sunday, December 7
New Member Sunday
Alternative Gift Market 8:45 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
Alternative Gift Market 2:00 - 4:30 p.m.
Allegro Choir Concert 3:00 p.m.

Allegro Concert

Friday, December 12
Alternative Gift Market 11:15 - 11:45 a.m.

Sunday, December 14
Alternative Gift Market 8:45 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
Annual Christmas Concert at 4:00 p.m.
Christmas Dinner at 5:30 p.m.
RSVP for Dinner: https://bit.ly/firstpresdinner2025

RSVP for Christmas Concert Dinner

Tuesday, December 16
Service of Comfort at 7:00 p.m. in the Tree of Life Chapel

Wednesday, December 24 - Christmas Eve
A Brief Service of Carols & Reflection at 2:00 p.m.
Children's Christmas Pageant at 4:00 p.m.
Prelude Music by the Rosewood Ensemble at 9:30 p.m.
Festive Christmas Eve Worship at 10:00 p.m.

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