



Advent Four - Love - Sunday Dec 20th, 2020 *Shearwater Worship Resource*

Gathering *& Lighting the Advent Candles*

We light a candle for Peace,
we light a candle for Hope
We light and candle for Joy



Now, we light a fourth candle,
awaiting the birth of Love in our hearts
and our world once more.

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.” Luke 1: 46b

Looking and Breathing

- Breathe in the Magnificence
- Look outside with favor

Call to worship

Greetings, favored one!

The Lord is with you.

The Lord is with us.

Do not be afraid.

The Lord is with us.

You have found favor with God.

the Lord is with us.

Come Holy Spirit,
as you came to Mary
May we greet you as she did:
“Here I am
The servant of the Lord.”

Acknowledging

Just as God was reconciling the world in Jesus Christ, so too, each week we seek reconciliation in this land. We therefore acknowledge the First Peoples of this place: their Elders past and present: and

those emerging: we seek healing and a Loving relationship together.



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress*

Singing

TIS 173 My soul gives glory to the Lord

My soul gives glory to the Lord,
in God my Saviour I rejoice.
My lowliness he did regard,
exalting me by his own choice.
From this day all shall call me blest,
for he has done great things for me;
of all great names his is the best,
for it is holy; strong is he.

His mercy goes to all who fear,
from age to age and to all parts.
His arm of strength to all is near;
he scatters those who have proud hearts.
He casts the mighty from their throne,
and raises those of low degree;
he feeds the hungry as his own;
the rich depart in poverty.

He raised his servant Israel,
rememb'ring his eternal grace,
as from of old he did foretell
to Abraham and all his race.
O Father, Son and Spirit blest,
in three-fold name are you adored;
to you be every prayer addressed,
from age to age the only Lord.

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Advent is a time of waiting and watching.

Take time with our daily devotions to watch and to wait for the coming of the Christ.

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Prayer

God, who is Love
 May we sing of your steadfast love forever.
 God, in Whom is Love Incarnate
 May we declare your steadfast Love, forever.
 God, who breathes Love alive.
 Your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.
 We arrive to dwell in your presence.
 As we pray, listen, sing and prepare in this final week in Advent,
 may your presence of love dwell in every preparation,
 in every pang of sorrow,
 in every act of kindness towards our neighbour.
 Greet us now, as we greet you:

In penance and faith, we confess to God our Sin: we say to God the things that need saying.
<we pray in silence>

“Do not be afraid...for you have found favor with God.”
Sin is forgiven: thanks be to God.

Listening

- 2 Samuel &: 1-11, 16
- Luke 1: 26-38

For these words of faith
 & Jesus the Word: **Thanks be to God.**

Reflecting - Rev. Jennie Gordon

Psalm 8: O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. ... When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you

are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

The psalm resonates with our feeling of smallness and

insignificance within the vast, cosmic array of the universe. It also asks a question that finds an answer in the gospel text for today, the last Sunday in advent, as we move towards the manger.

We've heard the story of the Angel's visit to Mary so many times before. So many times that it's easy to dismiss it. It's tempting to see it simply as the preface to the bigger, more dramatic story of the birth of Jesus in a stable in Bethlehem. And yet, according to an article in *Life* magazine, the prayer 'Hail Mary' lifts from the lips of people across the world in the Roman Catholic tradition more than two billion times a day, beginning: *Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.* That's from today's reading: Luke 1, verse 28.

I'm inviting you to remain in this intimate and miraculous scene for a little longer than usual. There's Mary, an angel and a conversation between them.

In today's reading, someone who is no-one says yes to receiving an unimaginable burden. Mary becomes a prophet, in the line of prophets, men and women, who have heard the call and responded. The disturbance that this has caused in the lives of the prophets before her has been well documented. The disruption that this will cause in her life is epic and without end. In the pattern of the prophets, when she meets the messenger she responds; firstly with fear,



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then with a question and then with consent.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, by J.R.R Tolkien, we read something similar:

A great dread fell on Frodo, as if he was awaiting the pronouncement of some doom that he had long foreseen and vainly hoped might after all never be spoken. At last, with an effort he spoke and wondered to hear his own words, as if some other will was using his small voice. 'I will take the ring,' he said, 'though I do not know the way.'

From Mary, to Middle Earth, to our own lives, we small people are sometimes asked by God to do great things. Hold that thought in tension with the reading from 2 Samuel. The great King David has finally settled into his house. He thinks out loud to Nathan the prophet, that, since he's now comfy and set-up, maybe the Lord would like a house as well. The Lord's reply is direct; 'In all this time of wandering, have I ever asked for that, and anyway, who says you could build it? In fact,' says the Lord to Nathan, 'tell the great King David that I will make *him* a house, forever sure.'

The mighty cannot make a house for God. But God will enlist a young woman; a bewildered, fearful, unlikely but willing prophet, in order to establish the house that has been promised to David. This house made by God will grow in flesh and blood in the flesh-and-blood womb of a woman and be born, risky, vulnerable, holy and totally dependent. This is how the self-giving God of love chooses to be housed and to come among us.

I'm wondering about our 'God-houses', our churches, that have been empty for months at a time through this year of

evacuation from fires and closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. God has not been absent, even though the churches have been closed.

God has been present in all our small lives, birthing new hope and wonder, offering comfort and healing. A year ago, could we have imagined that we might be worshipping weekly in our homes, through printed text or online, or that we might gather with glee outside under the trees, instead of inside with the organ, just to be together? I'm wondering if we've been challenged this year to think about the bricks and mortar 'houses' we build for God, and how they might contain and sometimes restrain our lives of faith and service.

In Psalm 8, the psalmist asks: *what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?* The story of the annunciation to Mary answers that question. The immortal, invisible God needed a young woman named Mary to bring about the miracle of Emmanuel, God-with-us. The immortal, invisible God needs each of us, each small and insignificant one of us, to consent to participate in the miraculous presence of Christ in our midst. Sure, we will be fearful. Sure, there will be costs and questions, but in the beginning and at the end, all we need is a simple response, "let it be."

If you haven't already seen this, you must! "Hey Mary" is a song written by Sam & Malcolm Gordon and it has a delightful video clip to go with it:

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVoGcumJwng> It's based on Luke 1: The Annunciation; exploring the idea of the incarnation being something that is happening through people as they allow Jesus' life to be born in them.

Here are some of the lyrics:

*Hey Mary, there's an angel in your house!
Said, 'Mary have I got some news for you.
You seem to think you're nothing much but
Heaven's coming close enough to touch, yeah!
Hey Mary, God is coming here through you!*

*There is no such thing as ordinary now God
is here. Every life and breath is blessed, you
never know when God might appear.*

Hey people, there's an angel in your house!

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

**Let us build a house
where love can dwell!**

All of us need a home, a place of belonging. Yet there are many in our world who long for a home. Through us bless the homeless, those looking for sanctuary, those needing a place to belong, those who are lonely.

**Let us build a house
where love can dwell!**

For some people, home is not a sanctuary. Many are trapped by infirmity, by addiction, by violence and anger. Others feel unwanted in their home.

**Let us build a house
where love can dwell!**

This world is our home, yet it is mistreated and neglected. Help us be good tenants and custodians. Help us love more deeply. These elements, these creatures, this atmosphere, they are home. May we take care, caretake.

**Let us build a house
where love can dwell!**

All of us know someone, or many someones, who feel lost, or hurt, or sad, or displaced, this day. We name in our quietness, those for whom we are concerned.....

**Let us build a house
where love can dwell!**

And when we get to the end, take us into you, our true place of belonging, to our new beginning. Our true home.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the
glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

Passing the peace

Sharing Peace in the season of Advent dares us to get excited: asks us to pause and see another's eyes and heart: and

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invites us to get ready to receive Love in return.

May the Peace of God
dwell with you:
and also with you.

Offering

At a time of preparing and gift giving:
we bring our offering
into our time of worship:
God who gives the gift of life
May these gifts we bring,
Deliver **Love** to this community,
Hope beyond our boundaries:
Peace between peoples and
Hope in every-day things.

Notices

In these busy days leading to Christmas Day, let's make it a priority to make contact this week, with those we know who have experienced a bereavement.

Singing All Are Welcome

Let us build a house
where love can dwell
And all can safely live,
A place where
saints and children tell
How hearts
learn to forgive.

Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
Rock of faith and vault of grace;
Here the love of Christ shall end
divisions;
*All are welcome, all are welcome,
All are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where prophets
speak,
And words are strong and true,
Where all God's children dare to seek
To dream God's reign anew.

Here the cross shall
stand as witness
And a symbol of
God's grace;
Here as one we claim
the faith of Jesus:
*All are welcome, all are
welcome,
All are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where love is found
In water, wine and wheat:
A banquet hall on holy ground,
Where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
Is revealed in time and space;
As we share in Christ the feast that frees
us:

*All are welcome, all are welcome,
All are welcome in this place.*

TiS 821 All are Welcome, Marty Haugen 1950-
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Re-Collection

Where in your life is God asking you to say 'yes' and 'let it be'. What small or seismic thing will be born because you give your consent; peace, hope, joy, or love, or all of the above? Let it be.

Blessing

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God,
to bring about the obedience of faith—

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to the only wise God, through Jesus
Christ, to whom be the glory forever!
Amen. (Romans 16: 25-27)

Shearwater Ministry Team:
Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson
Rev. Jennie Gordon
Rev. Ian Turnnidge



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Monday

Phrase: "Favoured One" (Luke 1: 28)

Wonder: The Lord is with you also, as God was with Mary.

Meditation: Nothing will be impossible with God.

You: Who can you bring a word of favour to this day?

Tuesday

Phrase: "I will appoint a place" (2 Sam 7: 10)

Wonder: What place is appointed to us?

Meditation: We want to be planted in the place you appoint God, but not so firmly that we are not in tune with your call to move forward.

You: Funny word, 'appoint'. To what am I appointed?

Wednesday

Phrase: How can this be? (Luke 1:34)

Wonder: How can I see deeper than the surface of things, to a place where wonder dwells?

Meditation: Hear our questions, author of life, and don't dismiss them. We ask because we dare to long for a way into your mysterious presence. We ask because we want to say 'yes' to your life within us.

You: If Mary came to dinner tonight, what questions would you ask her?

Thursday

Phrase: "Here I am" (Luke 1: 38)

Wonder: On this day, so close to Christmas Day, how can you be present with those who demand of you?

Meditation: Mary said Yes. "Let it be according to your word." May I this day also say 'Yes' to God.

You: Mary was perplexed, yet she remained listening for understanding. How can you stay with those things we don't yet understand?

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