

The Word Became Flesh

The Keezletown United Methodist Church
2022 Advent Devotional

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Abbreviations

KJV	The King James Version of the Holy Bible
NIV	The New International Version of the Holy Bible
NKJV	The New King James Version of the Holy Bible
NLT	The New Living Translation of the Holy Bible
NRSV	The New Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible
RSV	The Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible

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Introduction

Welcome to “The Word Became Flesh” which is the 2022 Advent Devotional from Keezletown United Methodist Church in Keezletown, Virginia.

Advent means “coming” and it is a season that begins the Christian year four Sundays before Christmas. Advent is a time to prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ (1) in his birth, (2) for how Jesus comes into our lives and world today, and (3) for when Jesus will come again to make all things new. Advent 2022 begins on Sunday, November 27 and continues through Christmas Eve, so there are 28 days this year to wait with some of the ways Jesus becomes real in our lives.

Some KUMC folks have written about their favorite Bible passages or those words from the Bible that have become real in their lives. For those who did not write prayers with their devotions, I have selected hymns, prayers, and blessings from scripture and the church. May God bless us as we read scripture, read devotions, and pray. May the words of God come to live in us through the grace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Rev. Joel Robinette

Day 1
November 27, 2022

“The Word Became Flesh”
John 1:1-18

And the Word became flesh, and did tabernacle among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14 YLT).

Bishop William Willimon has described God as a talker with a lot to say. The Bible begins with God speaking. God’s words are powerful so that when God speaks there is creative power. God speaks throughout the scriptures through prophets, angels, Jesus Christ, and apostles. When the Bible is read in churches all over the world, the reading is often followed with, “The Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.” When a preacher preaches there is expectation and hope that the words of God will be spoken and heard. God has words to speak to us. John 1:14 declares that the Word of God became flesh and tabernacled with us. That Word of God is Jesus. Jesus does not stay in heaven but comes to us here. Jesus came into the lives of Mary and Joseph; Peter and Mary Magdalene; Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. And Jesus still comes today. The Bible is filled with words from God, but God does not desire them to remain words on pages in a book. God would speak to us and write the grace of Jesus Christ onto our hearts.

This season of Advent is a great time to open our eyes, ears, and hearts to receive the words of God. Advent is a making-room-time for Jesus in our lives in all the ways Jesus will come. I love Robert Young’s “literal” translation of John 1:14 above where the Word of God, Jesus, became flesh and “tabernacled” with us. The tabernacle was the tent God lived in after making covenant with the Hebrews who were delivered from slavery and made God’s people. They lived in tents, were refugees, and moved around; so, God lived in a tent, guided them, and continued to speak words of life. The image of Jesus “tabernacling” or “tenting” with us is one I cherish. It reminds me of how Jesus comes right where we are, stays, and would lead us through anything and everything.

Prayer

Jesus, won’t you come into my life and tabernacle with me. Write your words on my heart, for I need your words of life.

Hymn #105 from *A Collection of Hymns for the People Called Methodists*, 1780

*In the wilderness I stray,
My foolish heart is blind;
Nothing do I know; the way*

*Of peace I cannot find;
Jesu, Lord, restore my sight,
And take, O take the veil away,
Turn my darkness into light,
My midnight into day.*

*Naked of thine image, Lord,
Forsaken, and alone,
Unrenewed, and unrestored,
I have not thee put on.
Over me thy mantle spread,
Send down thy likeness from above,
Let thy goodness be displayed,
And wrap me in thy love!*

*Clothe me with thy holiness,
Thy meek humility,
Put on me thy glorious dress,
Endue my soul with thee;
Let thine image be restored,
Thy name and nature let me prove;
With thy fullness fill me, Lord,
And perfect me in love.*

Rev. Joel Robinette

Day 2
November 28, 2022

“The Bible Makes Me Wonder”
Genesis 1:1 – 2:4

When my pastor asked me to write my favorite Bible verse and why, I immediately thought of,

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (KJV).

Not exactly my favorite Bible verse but I have often wondered, “What was God doing before this?” Have you ever wondered this or am I the only one? Of course, there is no answer!

Gloria Patri, Lesser Doxology, 3rd-4th century

*Glory be to the Father
and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen. Amen.*

Faye Hoover-Thomas

Day 3
November 29, 2022

“Noah”
Genesis 6:9 – 9:17

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is about Noah and the Ark. This story is in Genesis 6 and 7. Genesis 6 verse 19 says:

“And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you, they shall be male and female” (NRSV).

I love all kinds of animals and every time I read this story, I think to myself, how wonderful it would have been to have 2 of every animal on Earth on the Ark! Walking thru the Ark and seeing all the birds, all the wildlife, livestock. And knowing you were saving 2 of everything! I am sure that it was not easy to take care of all of the animals, but I could imagine what it felt like leading them off the Ark after the flood. I am sure it felt like a new beginning for all of them. Those of us who have ever worked in animal rescues know, we want to save them all. We want to be like Noah and be able to save every cat or dog that comes thru the door. But knowing we did everything we could for those animals that we can save, does make a difference. When animals came thru the door at the store I worked at, I wish I was like Noah, and try to give each animal a new beginning. Noah was brave and he believed in God and did what God told him to do. We all need to have some of Noah in us.

Prayer

Dear Lord, we pray for all during this Advent season. We pray that you come into our hearts and remind all of us what the true meaning of the holidays are really about. It isn't about the trees, presents, dinners – it is about the birth of Jesus. It is being with family and rejoicing in Jesus' birth. That is what the season is all about. We pray that you guide us thru the season and into the New Year, like you did Noah thru the rain, so we can open our hearts and see the beautiful sunshine that is there waiting for us. Amen.

Cathy Sites Chouiniere

Day 4
November 30, 2022

“God Knows”
Exodus 2:12

Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. (NIV)

This may seem like a strange verse to choose to write an Advent devotion about, and it certainly isn't a verse that is a favorite, BUT it is a verse that often makes me ponder.

This verse is written about good ole Moses. He sees a Hebrew slave (one of his own people) being beaten by an Egyptian and decides to take matters into his own hands. Before committing this terrible act, he “glances this way and that and sees no one.” He looks around, he surveys the situation, he's trying to make sure that he can do this wrong deed and not be seen. He's wanting to commit this wrong in secret and not get caught. However, justified he felt in taking this person's life – his conscience is already forewarning his wrong action by making him check to see if he would be seen doing it. Later, in verse 14, we read about Moses being confronted by a Hebrew the next day who asked him,

“Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid and thought, “What I did must have become known” (NIV).

Moses was busted! Even if the Hebrew hadn't confronted him about it there is someone else who would have known about it that Moses wasn't concerned about at the time – God. It can be tempting to glance this way and that and let that, “no one will know,” thought cross our minds before we make a choice that may not be pleasing to God or that would not represent us well as persons of good moral and ethical character.

Always remember, that even if you see no one else, God is still going to know! There is nothing that is hidden from him. Let your conscience be guided by the Holy Spirit to make choices pleasing to God.

The Christmas carol, “Santa Claus Is Coming to Town,” while it may be speaking of Santa, can still remind us:

*He sees you when your sleeping
He knows when your awake
He knows if you've been bad or good
So be good for goodness sake!*

Prayer

Father God, keep us mindful of your presence with us and equip us in all that we do to make choices that are good and pleasing to you. Amen.

Jenny Dillard

"Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" Songwriters Haven Gillespie and J. Fred Coots © 1934 J. Fred Coots.

Day 5
December 1, 2022

“The Mighty Hand of God”
Psalms 27:1

*The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the strength of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid? (NKJV)*

How many of us have been afraid? How many times did we let that fear consume us, only to realize afterwards that we were being held by the mighty hand of God? No matter what trial or suffering we may go through we can rely on God’s strength, his mercy, and grace. In times of weakness call upon the Lord and in good times give thanks for God supplying what we need.

Hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,
were not the right man on our side, the man of God’s own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth, his name, from age to age the same, and he must win the battle.*

*And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us.
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure; one little word shall fell him.*

*That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours, thru him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
the body they may kill; God’s truth abideth still; his kingdom is forever.*

Blessings,
B. J. Smith

“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” Words by Martin Luther, 1529; trans. by Frederick H. Hedge, 1853.
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Day 6
December 2, 2022

“Waiting”
Psalm 27:14

*Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD (NIV).*

When Sharma Lewis took office as the Bishop of our Virginia United Methodist Church Conference, her challenge was asking people to read the Bible in a year. Over the years I'd been in many Bible studies but had never read straight through, cover to cover. I accepted the challenge and incorporated it into my morning prayer/devotional time beginning January 2017. Each year she proposes a slightly different pattern to the way it is read. I'm now completing my fifth year.

The local Emmaus Board of Directors asked me to be the Women's Lay Director for the Walk to Emmaus. It's an honor and a HUGE responsibility. If you're unfamiliar with Emmaus, the purpose is to encourage and embolden *SPIRITUAL* leaders for the local church. It's held every year in the spring and fall. I organized a team of 26 women and three men for the Walk scheduled for spring 2020. After the second of four "teamings" (training), the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March and most United States and world businesses, schools, and churches closed as did our Emmaus Walk. We were postponed until fall...little did any of us know it would be fall of 2022 until it would be safe to resume without needing to wear masks.

In May of 2020, two months after shut-down, I came upon Psalm 27:14 again and because of the world crisis, it became my "verse of the year." Six months earlier our daughter had bought the two of us matching shirts that said, "Be strong and courageous"; God speaking to Joshua from the book of Joshua. Wow, how we all needed that encouragement NOW. One Sunday morning I turned on the television to Dr. Charles Stanley, an older gentleman, who spoke on MY Psalm the very first time I tuned in. I was riveted! The same sermon was aired the following week; perhaps the network thought more people needed an opportunity to hear it. He went into some of the reasons we sometimes have to wait, but to take heart or to take courage and wait for God's timing.

Several times I organized Emmaus teams only to be postponed but I never got frustrated. It became almost humorous! It isn't about ME. WE are not in control, GOD is! Two months ago, twelve women got to experience and feel the love of God in a new way at Camp Overlook. It was a spiritually-moving, holy, and fun time for the twelve "pilgrims" as well as the team members.

It was worth the wait!

Prayer

Dear Lord, God, Your timing is always perfect; be it 2,000 years ago with Jesus' birth or in our lives today. Help us to grow in our assurance and faith in You. Amen.

Tanya Dawn Eppard

Day 7
December 3, 2022

"Be Still"
Psalm 46:10

"Be still and know that I am God" (RSV).

In this Christmas season, and all the year round, I hope that you will have time to sit down for a few moments, close your eyes, be still, and hear Him say, "I love you, my Child. I'm as close as your heartbeat or the next breath you take. I love you as if you were the only child I created. Come to me and I will give you joy and peace."

Prayer

Dear Father: sometimes it's hard to hear your voice; channel my heart to hear.
Amen.

Diana Davis

Day 8
December 4, 2022

“Being Still”
Psalm 46:10

*“Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth” (NIV).*

In the summer of 2017, God placed a calling on my life. His new and radically different direction for me would mean a complete change in everything my family knew. My job would change, we’d have to move, and my children faced a possible change in schools. Taking a leap to follow God’s plan for my life, and my family, felt like it would require the perfect timing on every front: my job, our home, when we’d tell people, who we could tell, etc.

As the wheels started to turn, I felt great peace that God had a plan, but I also had to battle the human urge to stay in the driver’s seat. Opportunities would present themselves that seemed like the perfect solution to just one piece of the puzzle and I would feel the urge to try to push and hammer the rest of the pieces into place. Of course, this would never come to fruition and would leave me feeling frustrated and anxious.

One day, on my drive home, I pulled over to take a call from an employer I had not expected to hear from. They presented an option that seemed like the perfect way for me to get my foot in the door with the employer I wanted. As I got back on the road, I started to mentally manipulate the other pieces of the puzzle that needed to fall into place. I felt panicked as I tried to solve each problem that stood in the way of this opportunity being the answer to our prayers. We could live in an apartment for a few months, we could drive the kids to school each day, I could work an extra job for a few months, blah, blah, blah....

The harder I tried to grab on to the carrot that had been thrown my way, the more anxious I became. And, at that exact moment, a song came on the radio that carried scripture from Psalm 46:10,

“Be STILL, and know that I am God...”

I had heard this song before but that day it spoke to my heart and gave me iron-clad assurance that God’s plan for us would NOT require this kind of panicked manipulation of the situation. His plan would be perfect on ALL fronts. He would handle the smallest details.

The time between God’s call to step out in faith and the completion of His plan took two years. But, after this encounter with His word, I was no longer anxious about all the things that needed to fall into place at just the right time. God

did not need for me to plan and organize my way into the perfect solution. He needed me to be still – to get out of the way and watch Him work.

This song would pop up over and over in our two-year journey and each time it helped me wait a little longer on what God had in store. When setbacks threaten my peace, I uttered the words “be still” over and over until my heart believed I could truly do that. And, in the end, God did what He promised. His plan unfolded with every detail perfectly accounted for. The timing, the job, the kids’ schools, the home (right down to the breathtaking view that has given us such hope and peaceful reminders of His love) came together completely independent of my best efforts to make it happen in MY time.

The chorus of this song (and Psalm 46:10) stays with me and I hope it will be a blessed reminder to you, as well.

*You’re parting waters, making a way for me.
You’re moving mountains that I can’t even see.
You’ve answered my prayer, before I even speak.
All you need for me to be is still (“Still” by Hillary Scott).*

Pray Psalm 46:10

*Be still, and know that I am God.
Be still, and know that I am
Be still, and know
Be still
Be
Be still
Be still and know
Be still and know that I am
Be still and know that I am God.*

Kelli Sprague

“Still” Words and Music by Justin Ebach and Molly Reed © 2015 Curb Congregation Songs, Mike Curb Music; admin. by Curb Music Publishing.

Day 9
December 5, 2022

"He Knows"
Psalm 139:16

*Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance;
in thy book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them (RSV).*

I believe that God allows things to happen for a reason and that only His good will be glorified thru it. I struggle with change, but God is in today, and tomorrow, and if He allows me to go there, I will try to live to glorify Him and not be afraid of what is ahead. There is nothing greater than the Creator of All, the Lord God Almighty, and today, I praise His Holy name and thank Him for life, all that is involved with living it, and for all His many blessings to me.

Prayer

Dear Father: tomorrow is scary, but I know you are there waiting for me.
Thank you. Amen.

Diana Davis

Day 10
December 6, 2022

“Trust”
Psalm 143:8

Back in May when I was asked to be the Lay Director for the Men’s Emmaus Walk, I was excited to be asked and thought it would be fun to be working alongside Tanya Dawn Eppard since she was leading the Women’s Walk. But...I also knew it would be a lot of work and a big commitment, fall walks are always harder to get team members and pilgrims due to vacation time and other issues. It had been almost 3 years since we had had a walk and I have forgotten a lot of the how-tos of a walk. Six walks in a row had been cancelled. Was this one to be different? Was I qualified to do this? And the list went on. I was constantly looking for an awe-inspiring sign one way or another. For days, nothing came to me. I read more than I ever had, prayed about it constantly, asked several people’s opinions, and it consumed most of my thoughts for days.

Finally, when I was at work, I heard a voice say, “Do you trust me?” So, I searched my devotional for “Trust.” Psalm 143:8 came up:

*Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love,
for I have put my trust in you.
Show me the way I should go,
for to you I entrust my life (Scott Dodrill paraphrase).*

I talked it over with my wife one more time (because I knew I could not do this alone) and told her my story. I called to accept the invitation. That same night, my wife put her devotional book on the bed next to me, after moving her bookmark to the next random page. She was reading an older devotional book from 2018, something she picked up for \$2. I never pick up her book. She never leaves it on the bed. But when I picked it up, I read at the bottom of November 27, 2018:

Quit demanding an explanation for everything and learn to live with some unanswered questions in your Faith. Make this your mantra: Jesus, I trust you.

Some people think things are coincidental happenings. I disagree. God makes things line up for us all. There is a reason for everything that happens. We may never know all the details, but if we trust we can be assured He will come through with the best plan. It may not be our plan, but it will be for the best.

Although I don’t like coffee, I drink some for the caffeine when I am away from the wife’s tea. A guy mentioned my coffee cup I had not paid attention to – one word on the cup – “Trust.” I would love to say that I trusted through the entire

process, but that would be a lie. But looking back, I can see how His hand was on the entire process.

Prayer

Dear Lord, I praise you and I am thrilled that Your plans are far superior to mine. May we all learn to trust You and know that You are in control, without needing the awe-inspiring sign. Thank you for always walking with me, especially for SVEC Walk #109. Praise God that lives were truly changed by You. In Jesus' precious name we pray, Amen.

Scott Dodrill

Day 11
December 7, 2022

“White as Snow”
Isaiah 1:18

I had just gotten home from work and as I walked into the living room Jim said, “Hi, Piper got ahold of a pen today.”

I said, “Please don’t tell me that she was on our white comforter.”

Jim said, “She was.”

I walked into the bedroom and saw that indeed Piper, our puppy, had been on our bed. As I looked at several black spots and some lines my heart sank. It had not been a pen but a black permanent marker. I grabbed my phone and did what I usually do when I need information—you guessed it—I googled it for a solution to my problem. It said to use rubbing alcohol so as I got the bottle of alcohol and a rag. Piper joined me at the scene of *her* crime. I was telling Piper how upset I was and her usual wagging tail and perky ears were both looking pretty sad. I rubbed and rubbed and she sneezed and sneezed at the smell of alcohol. It was no use! Permanent meant permanent!

I walked into the living room and told Jim the spots were not going to come out.

Jim said, “Its okay, it will still keep us warm.”

I said, “I can always turn it over. No one will know the spots were there except you, me, and Piper.” If you are still reading this, then you will also know the spots are still there.

I believe that God uses everyday life to speak to us of His love. The spots of sin are never hidden from God but I’m so thankful that sin doesn’t have to be permanent. God gave us the solution! Jesus came as a baby, grew to be a man, and ultimately our Savior. Jesus paid the price for our forgiveness by His precious blood. I’m so thankful for a God that loves us so much to give us forgiveness just for the asking.

May you be blessed today remembering the grace and love that God gave you so that your life could be a witness to others. We are joined together as brothers and sisters because of the blood of Jesus.

*Come now, and let us reason together,
saith the LORD:
though your sins be as scarlet,
they shall be white as snow (Isaiah 1:18, KJV).*

P.S. Piper has been forgiven.

Hymn "Rock of Ages" Words by Augustus M. Toplady, 1776

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee;
let the water and the blood, from thy wounded side which flowed,
be of sin the double cure; save from wrath and make me pure.*

*Not the labors of my hands can fulfill thy law's demands;
could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow,
all for sin could not atone; thou must save, and thou alone.*

*Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling;
naked, come to thee for dress; helpless, look to thee for grace;
foul, I to the fountain fly; wash me, Savior, or I die.*

*While I draw this fleeting breath, when mine eyes shall close in death,
when I soar to worlds unknown, see thee on thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.*

Karen Mooney

Day 12
December 8, 2022

“Arrival of a Notable Person”
Isaiah 40:1-31

One of the definitions of Advent is the arrival of a notable person. We celebrate Advent the four Sundays leading up to Christmas when Christ came the first time as a baby. Its meaning goes deeper as we wait for Christ’s second arrival as the King of kings. Now-a-days, no one likes to wait. In a microwave world, everyone wants things fast. Stoplights at intersections turn red telling us to stop and wait our turn. It’s right to do as huge trucks whiz by while we wait. We should wait for the second coming like the prodigal son’s father waited for his son return.

*And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
and all the people will see it together.
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken (Isaiah 40:5 NIV).*

Prayer

Lord, may we never lose hope as we wait for the arrival of that most notable person, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Mac Coffman

Day 13
December 9, 2022

“Have Faith and Trust in the Lord”
Habakkuk 3:17-18

Bible commentator Warren Wiersbe has some good background on Habakkuk and wrote:

Habakkuk has faced the frightening fact that his nation will be invaded by a merciless enemy (which is Babylon). The prophet knows that many of his people will go into exile and many will be slain. The land will be ruined and the temple will be destroyed. Yet he tells God he will trust him no matter what happens. When he looked within he saw himself trembling with fear and when he looked around, he saw everything in the economy about to fall apart. But when he saw God, all his fears vanished.

In November 1997 after working with a company for almost 25 years I was terminated. I went 8 months without regular employment, just picking up temporary jobs for a day or two. At 61 years of age, I stacked lumber 10 hours a day at the Ethan Allen Plant. I heard about a Nutrient Management Specialist position for Rockingham County. My feeling was that I had the job “hands down.” However, someone else got the job. Things were getting tight financially. One morning, Diane asked me, “What are we going to do about groceries?” Since we didn’t have any money, I said I didn’t know. When she went out to the mailbox there was an envelope containing 20 ten-dollar bills. Several weeks later, I got an excellent job with the state and full benefits.

The Lord provides. We have to keep faith and trust in him.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, help us to trust in you and have faith knowing that you love us and care for us. Be with all of those in need. Comfort them in their time of trouble. Amen.

Len Williams

Day 14
December 10, 2022

“We, the Innkeeper”
Luke 2:7

...there was no room for them in the inn (KJV).

As the Christmas story that we read every year unfolds to the plight of Mary and Joseph and finding a place for Mary to give birth, I propose that we take a deeper look at this true story/situation and how we as children of God tend to be more like that despised Innkeeper than we realize.

The Innkeeper had quite a predicament in not having room to extend to Mary and Joseph. As we all know this was to be no ordinary birth, but the birth of the Son of God, the Messiah. In this scene, we need to ask ourselves, why wouldn't the Innkeeper be willing to do everything in his power to make room, to be inconvenienced, to make a difference for Mary and the unborn child. Many people, as they read the story, feel hate or anger towards the Innkeeper for this very reason. His lack of empathy and compassion is the backbone towards those very feelings we harbor towards the Innkeeper. There seems to be little or no excuse for his actions or lack thereof in our minds. I personally look at myself and would hope, if put in his shoes, that I would make a positive difference for mother and child, not just turn them away to a cold, dirty, smelly stable to share with the animals. In the Innkeepers defense it was late, he had no room, but also important to remember is the fact he was unaware that this child was to grow up and become the Savior for all mankind.

So, how does this relate to us today and how does this passage speak to me. Unlike the Innkeeper, we all know what and who this child is, will become, and means to mankind. Yet, like the Innkeeper and through the ages it seems that we have become more and more a people who also have “no room for him” as well. This leaves God and Jesus on the outside knocking to come into, be a part of, and be a priority of our crowded lives. Our lives today seem to revolve around work, family, other commitments, even self in what we feel is important and want (the list can go on and on). True, these can be important, but do they put our heart, mind, and every facet of our life in alignment with God and his desire for us. You see, God is the one knocking on our hearts and our lives, not the other way around. He wants and desires us and is offering each of us the opportunity for a new birth in life. This new life being offered comes with a fuller and healthier more intimate relationship with God, so that we can achieve eternal life in his kingdom. Unlike the Innkeeper, we must open ourselves up, be willing to be inconvenienced, and make a concerted effort.

My resolution each Advent and New Year season is that I would continue to open that door wider as he knocks. We want and need to make him a bigger part of

our lives and our spiritual growth. Growth is only achieved by that door opening wider and wider. I ask that we do this gladly and freely, and not grudgingly with reservations. Remember, later in his life he knowingly, willingly, and with no reservations gave his all at Calvary.

Prayer

Dear Lord, not only in this Advent season but every day in life, let me open the door to my heart wider for you. May you not stand having to knock or even be turned away. Let me do so with a willing heart and mind focused on obeying and pleasing you. May your love, grace, and blessing wash over me. I ask that you give me, your humble servant, the armor to do your will and goodness here on earth. I ask that you give me a loving and joyful heart as I go forth to do thy will in a life of serving you. Amen.

Neil Sacra

Day 15
December 11, 2022

“Always There”
Luke 2:8-14

Many times, I have been alone under the night sky: admiring the many constellations, wishing on a star, searching for the Milky Way, waiting for a meteor shower, looking at the Man in the Moon and realizing it has all been there for centuries...always there just like God's love.

What an honor was bestowed on the shepherds...just doing their job. Probably tired and weary. Then it happened. Yes, it was probably scary at first, but can you imagine how utterly amazing that message was...how breathtaking the angels singing must have been. God knew he had a captive audience and they did not let him down. Most of the time when God speaks to us it is more like a nudge. He is still communicating with us today after all these years.

Blessing

Peace be with you
and over the whole world
good will to all.

Sharon Martin

Day 16
December 12, 2022

“Different Versions...Same Meaning”
Luke 2:10-12

When I was a child, I attended Sunday school at the “Old” United Methodist Church that used to stand where the parking lot of our current church is now. Back then there were a lot of children in those Sunday School classes, at least it seemed like it at the time. I can remember one year, I was probably around 8 or 10 years old, we were getting ready for a Christmas program and I was going to be the angel who brought the shepherds news about the birth of Jesus. I had to memorize Luke 2:10-12 of the King James Bible:

“Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

That was a lot for a child to memorize, but I must have done alright, because I have always remembered those three short verses. Many years later, when Dawn-Marie Singleton was our pastor, we didn’t have as many children in the church, but we were still trying to have a Christmas program, so some adults were volunteered for parts. I again found myself as the angel bringing the news to the shepherds. I was given the same verses, but something was different:

“Do not be afraid, I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you, he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find the baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (NIV).

I just couldn’t get past the different words and ended up reciting those verses just as I had many years ago with the King James words, and I don’t think anyone even noticed.

Prayer

Lord, I thank you for our church, I thank you for Sunday School and all the “children” who attend, I thank you for Christmas programs and for Bibles of many versions that we are free to read and study, but most of all, I thank you for your Son Jesus who was born on that night many years ago and was “wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

Cheryl Carr

Day 17
December 13, 2022

“Stanzas 2 - ?”
Matthew 2:1-12 and Luke 2:8-20

There are several Advent hymns in our current *United Methodist Hymnal*, pages 196-216, sectioned “Promised Coming.” About 9 of these we as a congregation know fairly well, especially the first verse which we can sing by heart.

When preparing church music for Sunday services (and wondering how many times will I have to play this hymn) I most always take the opportunity to read thru the less familiar “stanzas 2 - ?” So often, there is an “ah-hah!” moment, such as a context I hadn’t considered or a description that truly paints the picture. The author’s thoughts provide me yet a new/better understanding about Christ’s coming, leading to excitement and anticipation all over again.

As far back as 1523, Charles Wesley and many others have shared their desire for us to understand and embrace the Promised Coming. For most, however, it takes multiple verses to get the point across. This year, as we sing JOYFULLY those verses we know so well, let’s take time to learn (something new?) from those less familiar lines, “stanzas 2 - ?”

A personal favorite is the 2nd verse to “There’s a Star in the East”:

*If you take good heed to the angel’s words;
rise up, shepherd, and follow;
you’ll forget your flocks, you’ll forget your herds;
rise up, shepherd, and follow.*

Prayer

Pray that as we move thru the next few weeks into Advent, God will enable us to heed the Word, “Rise up,” and be a follower of Jesus Christ.

Carol Sacra

“Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow (There’s a Star in the East)” Words African American spiritual.
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Day 18
December 14, 2022

“Get Out of the Box”
Luke 6:45

“A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of” (NIV).

Greetings K'Town! While searching for ideas for a devotional, this verse (Luke 6:45) stood out. It reminded me of a book that I read for Organizational Behavior at JMU last spring titled *Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting Out of the Box* written by the Arbinger Institute. In this book, the main character is trying to climb the corporate ladder, but many of his teamwork decisions are made by how he perceives his co-workers' ideas, not by facts or why they have those ideas. Many of his homelife decisions were made the same way which detrimentally affected his family life. They called this “being in a box,” which acted as a blinder to what was really happening around him. The main character's thoughts and perceptions were deceiving him, causing him to make bad decisions, in turn creating a toxic atmosphere around him. His mentors spent a lot of time encouraging him to “get out of the box,” remove the blinders that are creating thoughts that are deceiving him.

This book was a good example of the mouth speaking what the heart is full of. This negativity created a toxic atmosphere around the main character. Toxic atmospheres like this bring down everyone around you, and from a work standpoint, lower production. Imagine what this type of deception can do at home. From a homelife standpoint, it could cause you to say inappropriate things to your significant other, children, or any other family member or friend. Things that are out of line.

Have you ever wondered why someone did something a certain way, only to conjure up your own thought or perception as to why they did so, in turn making you angry and speaking negatively about them? I have. But now, I am aware of how my own self-deception can have a negative impact on everyone around me.

I would like to encourage us all to “get out of the box,” and store good in our hearts. After all, the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

A Prayer by Saint Thomas Aquinas, 13th Century

*Give us, O Lord,
steadfast hearts, which no unworthy thought can drag downward,
unconquered hearts, which no tribulation can wear out,
upright hearts, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside.*

*Bestow upon us also, O Lord our God,
understanding to know you,
diligence to seek you,
wisdom to find you,
and a faithfulness that may finally embrace you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Brandon Bowman

Day 19
December 15, 2022

“Transformation”
Romans 12:2

Do not conform any longer to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will (NIV).

I am not sure exactly when or how this verse came to be my favorite. I believe it was around the time of my Emmaus Walk in October of 2000. I was certainly growing in my faith during this time and in my relationship with Jesus. I was discovering what it meant to give my whole life to Christ versus just going through the motions of being a “good Christian.” I experienced my own transformation and my views, thought processes, attitudes, and outward expressions of such became shaped more by thinking: how those things about myself would impact the feelings and emotions of others and be received by them. How could I reflect Jesus and his compassion, kindness, and love in my interactions with others?

Our world has changed drastically over the past couple of years with Covid playing a significant role in that. I know division and strife existed long before Covid ever came into the picture – it just seems that the isolation and uncertainty and change created by it have served to magnify and give voice to the many issues, concerns, choices, and differences that work to divide us and have closed the door to being able to find much common ground. I have never seen or experienced as much disrespectful, hurtful, selfish, dishonest, or downright hateful interactions between people who just think differently than one another. So many people, it seems, have adopted a mentality of, “if you don’t agree with me and see things my way, then you are wrong and against me,” and this is sad and disheartening in so many ways. People are conforming to the world around them: a world that looks to tear down instead of build-up; a world that sits behind a screen rather than having face to face conversations; a world that sees things as very black and white and doesn’t recognize the many shades of gray that exist; a world that is torn by division and unable to recognize the many things that could unite us. I could go on and on, but I don’t need to. You have all seen and experienced it, in one way or another yourselves, I’m sure.

I am thankful for my transformation experience and my Christmas wish, my Christmas prayer, would be for the whole world to experience a Christ-like transformation. For the world to be renewed with kindness, empathy, compassion, respect, and love for one another to be able to seek that common ground, to seek God’s good, pleasing, and perfect will. It all starts with you and how you will choose to allow His transformation in your life. It will affect not only you, but all those around you, too.

Prayer

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me. Amen.

Jenny Dillard

“Let There Be Peace on Earth” Words by Sy Miller and Jill Jackson © 1955, renewed 1983 Jan-Lee Music.

Day 20
December 16, 2022

“Get Down on Their Level”
1 Corinthians 9:22-23

Barbara Smith said, “I like Paul. Paul was great.” Paul wrote, “I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22 NRSV). I like my Bible that I have on a disc so I can listen to it being read out loud.

Years ago, there were so many children in the church and there was no one to teach them. I taught them and had a class of ten to sixteen children. I had “the Scotts” at one time. I had to come down to their level. I would get on the floor with them and we would play a shoe game where we took off our shoes and put them in a pile and you had to find your shoe the fastest. We had fun times. I liked to see the kids happy. We made our own flannel boards and told stories. With the flannel boards the children could touch, see, play, and act out the Bible stories. I taught using the flannel board because the children could go right up to it and engage with the Bible stories. You would be surprised at what they would say! When kids go out from the church they may get in trouble, but with the teachings from the Bible they would have something to fall back on in the love of God.

You don’t have to be smart. The Bible is there for us. When we read it, God will work on us to understand if we let God.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for bringing the love and salvation of God down to our level. Thank you for teachers like Barbara Smith who share the Gospel (good news!) in ways we can understand. Bring your grace in a way we can understand. Fill us with your inspiration on how we may share grace on a level our neighbors may understand.

Barbara Smith and Rev. Joel Robinette

Day 21
December 17, 2022

“God Is My Strength”
Philippians 4:13-14

I can do everything through Him who gives me strength. Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles (NIV).

Right now, we are living in a troublesome world. A world that demands us to go through each day with strength. What exactly defines having strength? I believe it is having the endurance to move forward even in times of difficulty. I know when I trust God completely and keep placing my hope in Him, I never have to doubt my abilities. I have the God who can do all things on my side. There is absolutely nothing that is impossible with Him. I know he will strengthen and equip me to handle even the most difficult problem or situation every day. I am so happy His word doesn't say I can do some things, but it says I can do all things! I believe that God is my strength, and my salvation in times of trouble. It is through His strength and help that I cannot only take on all the problems life throws my way, but I will also be able to move mountains!

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for your power that resides in me. Thank you for being my strength every day, and my salvation in times of trouble. Thank you that I may trust you completely throughout my life. Amen.

Judy Coffman

Day 22
December 18, 2022

“I Can Do All Things”
Philippians 4:13

It is impossible for me to choose one favorite verse or passage in the Bible. There are so many really good ones. But there is one verse that has helped me in uncomfortable situations more than any other. Paul writes in Philippians 4:13,

I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength (Chris Cole paraphrase).

I can get on an airplane with ten people holding various offices around the Virginia Conference UMC (only one of whom I knew); and fly over 20 hours to spend two weeks in the very poor, war-ravaged country of Mozambique on the southeast coast of Africa.

I have heard that the one thing a majority of people fear most is public speaking. I knew I would be expected to share my experiences in Mozambique with United Methodist Women groups, and I was okay with that. However, if you would have told me twenty years ago that I would be giving a sermon at Sunday morning worship services around the Conference, I probably would have said, “You’re crazy, I could never do that.” But,

I can do all things...

Right? We all have God-given spiritual gifts and talents, and He expects us to use them. There are many different ways to do mission work, and the rewards are unbelievable.

My first “sermon” was at Marquis Memorial UMC on the Staunton District. I was definitely nervous for this one, and would like to have been somewhere else – anywhere else. Just remember,

I can do all things...

I took Lori and her family along for moral support. When we arrived we were greeted by the minister, none other than Doug Akers, who was pastor at KUMC when we moved to the Valley in 1983. It turned out to be a very enjoyable day. Doug even took us all out to eat at Mrs. Rowe’s Restaurant.

The last time I preached was at New Hope UMC as part of the Danville District Mission Celebration, a three-day event which culminated with lay persons from all over the Virginia Conference filling every pulpit on the district. When I arrived at the church on Sunday morning I was told where to sit and when to give

the children's sermon. What? Nobody ever said anything to me about a children's message; and I had about ten minutes to come up with something. Not to worry.

I can do all things...

Music to the rescue! We did a lot of singing on the bus. I taught the children to sing a chorus to the tune of "Red River Valley" in three languages: Xitswa, a native dialect; Portuguese, the official language of Mozambique; and English.

*Thank you God, thank you Lord, Hallelujah (3x)
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah!*

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for opportunities to try new things and serve You in different ways; and for the assurance that You will always be there to help us overcome any fears that might deter us from doing what should be done. Amen.

Chris Cole

Day 23
December 19, 2022

“Be Joyful During Trials”
James 1:2-5

For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow (James 1:3, NLT).

The past year has not been easy. On July 27, 2021, my mom was admitted to the hospital and placed in ICU. As I sat there with her one day, reading through a devotion book, I had to re-read this one particular page. It was speaking to me! How did it know how I was feeling? The devotion concluded with a question which left me asking myself, “Why was my mom so sick?” I kept telling myself that in a few days she’d go back to Bridgewater Home and all would be fine. Wrong. On August 9, 2021, mom did go back to Bridgewater Home but under hospice care. My mind kept wandering back to that devotion, this time asking myself, “How can I face the death of my mom and yet live each day to the fullest?” We were fortunate to have mom with us until September 26, 2021, and we tried to be with her as much as possible. It took a lot of prayers and support from family and friends to help get me through those days and even the emotions today.

In James 1:2-5, we are told to be joyful when trials come our way, or in other words, to see the good side of the bad things happening. When trials come our way, our faith is tested. And when our faith is tested, we need to trust God more and believe that He will carry us through. Our faith and trust in God will continue to grow as more trials come our way. Always remember that God loves you and cares for you, and He will carry you through whatever life brings.

Prayer

Father God, life is not always easy. We seem to always question why something is happening and how we will handle it. Please continue to remind us that you are with us always. Amen.

Michele Dodrill

Day 24
December 20, 2022

“Jesus Carries Us”
Matthew 11:28-30; 1 Peter 5:7; and John 14:19

I like the poem “Footprints in the Sand” where when looking back over your life you see one set of footprints in difficult times. It is like Jesus says, “The one set of footprints is mine, that is when I was carrying you.”

Jesus carries us.

He is taking care of us when we don’t even know it.

That is like the song I like, “Because he lives, I can face tomorrow,” just knowing that he carries the burdens. He was taking care of us even when we didn’t think he was there. He was there all the time taking care of us. “Because he lives, I can face tomorrow.” I have no fears. All fears are gone. “He holds the future.”

I sort of relied on that at my husband Toby’s death. When he died December 19, 2020, I had to rely on that. I was sick with COVID-19 at the same time. Toby was already in the hospital dying from it. He was on a ventilator and everything. I had to make decisions as his power of attorney. The doctors called me to say Toby’s kidneys were failing and would need dialysis and his heart was failing and they needed to do CPR and I knew Toby would not want all of that. I guess I knew I was freeing him to go be with the Lord. He would not have liked living on all of those things.

The interesting thing was I knew he was really ready to go and be with the Lord. He said to me beforehand while we were still together at Bellaire at Stone Port Assisted Living, “Let’s go together.”

I said, “I’m not ready to go yet. I want to live to 95 like my Aunt Minnie Martz”, who was my daddy’s sister. I said, “You’re going to have to live till 95 if we are going to go together.”

I had to take back those words because I was afraid he would struggle and try to live because I had told him that. While he was in the hospital, for two nights I dreamed a dream about a song, “Can I have this dance for the rest of my life?” I dreamed of dancing with Toby. Toby played drums in Carl Miller’s band and we went to see them years later in Florida. Toby got introduced as the former drummer. Carl invited Toby and me to start the dance. In that dream I dreamed we were dancing to that song. I told Toby to dream that dream, too. I told Toby that, “When it is my time, I want you to come back and get me,” so he would know it was okay to go ahead of me. I think Jesus is taking care of me here now.

Blessing

*The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you,*

*and be gracious unto you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace (Numbers 6:24-27 NRSV).*

Mary Jane Propst

“Because He Lives” Words by Gloria and William J. Gaither © 1971 Hanna Street Music; admin. by Gaither Copyright Management.

“Could I Have This Dance” songwriters Wayland Holyfield and Bob House © Sony/ATV Tree Publishing, Bibb Music Publishing, Inc.

Day 25
December 21, 2022

“Got a Minute?”
1 Peter 5:7

Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you (RSV).

If it matters to you, it matters to God.
No, not my little piddly insignificant bothersome things; He has way more important things to do then listen to my stuff.

Nope.

If it matters to you, it matters to God.
In that moment that you are talking to Him, it’s just you and Him: a Father listening to His child, feeling their pain, their worries, their joy, their thanks. He’s always listening and waiting for you to say, “Hey Father, got a minute? I’d like to talk to you.”

Prayer

Dear Father: thank you for being there listening, anytime, anywhere. Amen.

Diana Davis

Day 26
December 22, 2022

“The Victory Plan”
Revelation 12:10-11

“Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (NKJV).

These verses tell us the victory plan that God and Jesus have for us, the way that we will defeat Satan. The victory starts with Jesus’ blood giving us salvation, and from there it goes to our testimony of His grace, and our willingness to even die for this belief. The victory over Satan and evil does not come by seeing certain people elected to positions of power. It does not come by legislating what people can or cannot do, and punishing those who don’t follow our rules. It does not come from attending church, singing hymns, and doing “religious” things. If you have not yet accepted Jesus’ blood as payment for your salvation, there is no hope of victory over Satan until you do. If you have accepted the life that Jesus purchased for you, don’t be afraid to share what He has done, and what He is doing, in your life. That is where your victory will be found! And be willing to stand by your decision, no matter the cost. That, too, is where your victory will be found!

Prayer

Dear Jesus, I thank You for the blood that You gave for my salvation, and for the salvation of all who believe. Please give me opportunities to witness to what You have done in my life, and please not only help me to see these opportunities, but also I ask that the words I speak at these times would not be my words, but rather that You would speak through me. And please help me, each and every day, to lay down my own hopes and desires and take up the work that You have for me instead. In Your name I pray, Amen.

Steve Suter

Day 27
December 23, 2022

"Diane Williams's Meaningful Verses"

Diane Chapman Williams died on June 1, 2021. One of the first things her family shared with me was her Bible. It was a study Bible with thin pages. But at the beginning and end were heavier pages she covered with "Meaningful Verses." Diane wrote down scripture addresses with book, chapter, and verse. She also wrote quotations, summaries, or her insights. Diane's daughter Jennifer shared that she remembered her mom saying some of these things. That suggests to me that Diane wrote some of these words of God on her heart, so much so, they came out in her speaking and relationship with her daughter. I would like to list some of those verses with Diane's comments about them. Read and see what from the Bible spoke to Diane. What will the words from God say to you? What words from God do you need to write down on your heart so they may come to be in your life?

Isaiah 40:8 - "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand forever."

Psalms 118:29 - "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good..."

Isaiah 30:21 - "...you will hear a voice behind you saying, This is the way; walk in it."

Jeremiah 30:22 - "So you will be my people & I will be your God."

Matthew 28:20 - "Surely I am with you always..."

Romans 4:13, 14 - "We receive salvation, we don't earn it."

Isaiah 61:3 - "...beauty instead of ashes & the oil of joy for mourning."

Mark 9:24 - "...I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief..."

Luke 18:27 - "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

Matthew 14:25-33 - Jesus walks on water

James 1:17-25 - "Every good & perfect gift comes from God..."

Proverbs 3:5-6 - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart..."

John 15:13 - "Greater love hath no man..."

Job 19:25 - "I know that my redeemer lives..."

1 John 4:19 - "We love because he first loved us."

James 3 - Taming the tongue

1 John 3:16-20 - "This is how we know what love is..."

Nehemiah 8:10 - "...the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Psalms 30:19 - "How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as He hears, He will answer you!"

Hebrews 11:1 - "Faith is being sure of what we hope for & certain of what we do not see." (2-16 - "Faith")

Romans 3:23 - "...all have sinned & fall short of the glory of God"

Habakkuk 2:3 - Your set time is coming

Luke 6:12-16 - Jesus chooses his disciples

Psalms 62:5-8 - "...my hope come from him...God is our refuge."

1 Corinthians 10:13 – “...He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. He will also provide a way so you can stand up under it.”
Deuteronomy 6:4-6 – “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, & all your strength.”
John 1:14 – “And the word became flesh & dwelt among us.”
Job 1:21 – “The Lord gives & the Lord takes away.”
Psalms 27:14 – “Be strong, take heart, & wait for the Lord.”
1 Timothy 6:17 – “God richly provides us everything for our enjoyment.”
1 Timothy 6:10 – “The love of money is the root of all evil.”
Luke 8:22-25 – “Jesus calms the sea”
James 2:17 – “Faith without works is dead.”
Luke 7:7 – “...only say the word & my servant will be healed.”
Psalms 62:5-8 – “My soul finds rest in God alone...”
Philippians 4:8 (4:4-9) – “Think good thoughts”
James 3:8-12 – “Controlling your tongue”
Philippians 4:13 – “I can do everything...”
Matthew 25:40 – “...the least of my brothers...”
1 Peter 3:8-16 – “...live in harmony...”
Romans 8:28-39 ... “all things work together for good”...
Luke 6:27-36 – “...turn the other cheek”...(the “Golden Rule”)
Philippians 1:3 – “I thank my God every time I remember you”
Isaiah 49:16 – “I have engraved your name on the palm of my hand.”

Sarum Blessing, 13th Century

*God be in your head, and in your understanding.
God be in your eyes, and in your looking.
God be in your mouth, and in your speaking.
God be in your heart, and in your thinking.
God be at your end, and at your departing.*

Rev. Joel Robinette

Day 28
December 24, 2022

“How Can I Keep from Singing?”
Luke 1:46-55

Christmas is a blessed way to follow the waiting and “coming” of Advent. Praise God that Jesus has arrived in the flesh.

I want to close the devotional with an invitation for us all to pray Mary’s Song known as the *Magnificat*. Earlier in Luke, Mary received the words of God from the angel Gabriel and she also received Jesus into her womb, but she did not sing at that time. She magnified the Lord and sang after Elizabeth greeted and blessed her. Elizabeth also had words of God spoken into her life. Elizabeth recognized the Word—Jesus—in Mary, and Elizabeth told Mary about it! And Mary rejoiced! I pray that as we have seen “The Word Became Flesh” in the lives of people at KUMC that we would all know the joy of Jesus becoming real in our lives. As we close this time of Advent and welcome the arrival of Jesus in Christmas, I want to invite us to rejoice along with Mary by praying the *Magnificat*. After praying the *Magnificat*, I thought it would be fitting to pray or sing the hymn “How Can I Keep from Singing?” since Jesus has spoken the words of life to us.

“Magnificat”

*My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
he has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever” (Luke 1:46-55 NRSV).*

Hymn "My Life Flows On (How Can I Keep from Singing)" by Robert Lowry, 1869

*My life flows on in endless song, above earth's lamentation.
I hear the clear, though far-off hymn that hails a new creation.*

[Refrain]

*No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that Rock I'm clinging.
Since love is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?*

*Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear that music ringing.
It finds an echo in my soul. How can I keep from singing?*

*What though my joys and comforts die? I know my Savior liveth.
What though the darkness gather round? Songs in the night he giveth.*

*The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, a fountain ever springing!
All things are mine since I am his! How can I keep from singing?*

Blessing

May the grace, peace, and presence of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
bless you and keep you now and always.

Rev. Joel Robinette