

## December 13, 2020 – At Home Worship

Welcome to worship for our Third Sunday of Advent, the season of readying ourselves for the coming of the light of the world into our midst. Hopefully, by this week, you have set up your Advent candles at home, and I offer you the encouragement to pause here, light your three Advent candles, and welcome the hope, peace and joy of Christ into your home. Today our focus scripture is Mary's Magnificat.

Our church building, per council decision, remains physically closed for services through at least January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Donna Graham is following up to make sure that, when we fall back down to a lower risk category (Stage Orange or better), we will be all set with disciples to re-open for in-person worship 😊

We had our final Adult studies for 2020 last week. A big thank you to Avery and Heide for making those online gatherings possible. Both will resume in January 2021.

Until we work out our technology limitations, we are experimenting on Heide's Zoom service for live online worship. It is not a perfect system yet, but it allows us to gather together for worship from home. This week Brad will play live from his location for Zoom worship. We want to ensure this is the best package for our use before the church invests in our own Zoom subscription, so a big thank you to Heide for sharing the service she pays for, and for helping us in the work of sacred experimentation and discovery. **You don't have to have a computer or internet to connect to the Zoom service, you can also just call in on one of the numbers included here, using your telephone keypad to enter the meeting ID and Passcode when asked.** This is the information for our Zoom worship connection this week:

Heide Emrich is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting for Sunday worship: Dec 13, 2020 09:50 AM

### **Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84533086817?pwd=S1QxSDNENXYwRmVaNOl2K2tPMXl1UT09>

**Meeting ID: 845 3308 6817**

**Passcode: 620289**

**Canadian numbers (long distance charges may apply)**

**1 587 328 1099 or**

**1 647 374 4685 or**

**1 647 558 0588 or**

**1 778 907 2071 or**

**1 204 272 7920 or**

**1 438 809 7799**

Please consider sharing the link with others and joining us on Sunday. Also, upcoming:

- On **December 21<sup>st</sup>**, the longest night of the year, I will co-lead a 7:00pm worship service with Revs Anne Anderson and Joanna Miller on Zoom. Details for that service will follow, so stay tuned for the invitation.
- **Christmas Eve** service will be made available in three formats: a paper mail out, an online offering with YouTube links that you can access at your convenience, and a live online video Zoom service at 7:00pm.
- At St Peter's, Christmas Day service is usually very small, but this service also will be made available by paper mail out, and as an online offering with YouTube links. **If you would like to attend a live service of Word on Christmas Day at 10:00 am, please email me.** I will host and lead that live online video service on Google Meet – this requires an email address for the link. If I do not get email responses to attend a live service by Sunday December 20<sup>th</sup>, we will leave this as just a mail out service.

In the upcoming time before Christmas, I have some doorway visits, with communion kits (which will include sacramental elements, prayers & instructions) that you can use at home with your families. Please contact the church office if you would like a kit delivered to your door by me 😊

As always, if you need a phone call or distanced visit, please do reach out by email or phone: [pastor@st-peters-cambridge.org](mailto:pastor@st-peters-cambridge.org) or 519-653-4721 ... It is not my intention to neglect pastoral visitation ministry during this time, sometimes my shins just need a swift kick. The church office is closed, but walking visits or coffee shop visits, video phone visits or regular phone visits remain available ☺ Have a blessing filled week, and please do be in touch if I may be of help or support in these times!

- with love, in Christ, Pastor Janaki.

We give thanks to God, for granting our existence on this safe, bountiful, land,  
and we recognize that we thrive and enjoy life here,  
on the traditional territories of  
the Anishnabe, Neutral and Haudenosaunee peoples.

**Please take a few moments of silence, prepare your heart, centre yourself for worship.**

**Gathering Music – Abide, Improvisation by Brad on Synthesizer & Bells**  
Click here: <https://youtu.be/bGHnsAHeKHs>

**Greeting:**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all, in your home and in mine.

***Prayer of the Day:*** God of our material reality, your narrative walks alongside us. In Mary, your narrative was embodied, giving us your precious Son, Jesus. Guide us to an embodied living of our faith narrative, speaking love, peace and joy through our bodies. Amen.

**The Lesson: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11.**

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the broken-hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.  
They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.

For I the Lord love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;<sup>[b]</sup>  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.  
Their descendants shall be known among the nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,  
 my whole being shall exult in my God;  
 for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
 he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
 as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
 and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
 For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
 and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
 so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise  
 to spring up before all the nations. [NRSV]

Word of God, Word of Life. **C: Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel Acclamation: Bless the Lord, My Soul, Taizé; Bradley Moggach, Synthesizer and Bells**  
**Click Here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wi38m9haMno&t>**

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**The Holy Gospel according to Luke 1:46b-55.**

**C: Glory to you O Christ.**

“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.” [NRSV]  
 This is the Gospel of Jesus: **Thanks be to Christ.**

**Word Segment (Prayers by Sarah Glinski, meditation by Pastor Janaki,  
 music by Brad – melody from hymn #882):**

**Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2HZ6cAqWPQ>**

Sarah praying ...

Let us pray together, in the presence of God, as we meditate on this period of waiting and preparing for the coming of Christ,

saying “May our souls magnify the Lord”, and all responding “Hear our prayer.

This year has brought many unpredictable challenges. We ask for your strength to help us continue to navigate this pandemic.

We pray that we have the faith and patience of Mary so that we might experience hopeful anticipation instead of fear.

We know that our bodies are dwelling places for your divinity and we are blest to be your servants. We pray that your spirit works through us bringing to fruition great things.

May our souls magnify the Lord. R: Hear our prayer.

**Where do we find Mary, and where in her experience do we find ourselves?**

This year has felt like a year of waiting ... waiting for lockdown to finish ... waiting for church to re-open, waiting to see what would happen with schools, waiting for decisions to be made ... waiting for vaccines to be developed ... waiting and waiting and waiting.

The waiting that happens during pregnancy is a very different kind of waiting ... often when we are waiting for something, someone, an event -that which we are awaiting is outside of ourselves. But as, as we approach the third week of Advent, we join in a completely different kind of waiting ... we join in waiting for the coming of Jesus.

In the account given in the Gospel of Luke, the first miraculous pregnancy that is spoken of is not the pregnancy of Mary at all, but that of her elderly cousin, Elizabeth. They were a righteous couple, Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah, but Elizabeth is barren, and so they have no children. Whilst Zechariah is doing his temple duties one day, the angel Gabriel appears to him and foretells the birth of their son, who is to be named John, and who is to “make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

This same Gabriel visits Mary, six months into Elizabeth’s pregnancy ... and he lets Mary know that she has been chosen by God to bear the Son of God, who will be named Jesus. This is a very strange occurrence ... for Mary is a virgin, and engaged to be married! It would be unheard of for a faithful Jewish woman to be found pregnant before her marriage ... but Mary puts up no objections ... quite the contrary – she expresses her willingness to serve God ... this is how a barren elder and a virgin come to be with child!

Both Mary and Elizabeth find their bodies to be the dwelling places of God’s narrative alongside their own narratives ...

For Mary: alongside being about to get married – never ever having known a man,

For Elizabeth: alongside the long married life of, no doubt having tried, but not having been able to be conceive...

Alongside these, their own narratives, these women join the narrative of God, and the inevitable waiting that accompanies pregnancy ... As we wait in these COVID times, experiencing so many of the worries and anxieties of these unusual times in bodily ways – where are we carrying God’s narrative in our bodies? Is it in our hands and feet? Our hearts and minds? Our eyes and ears? How are we waiting to see what God will bear forth?

Mary waits by visiting, and celebrating in song ...

Mary goes to visit Elizabeth, now big with child, and as Elizabeth hears Mary’s voice, the baby in Elizabeth’s womb, the one who will become the locust eating baptizer, John, he leaps in his mother’s body. Mary begins her song of celebration and joy and thanksgiving as she encounters Elizabeth ...

(singing the Magnificat ...)

My soul does magnify the Lord;  
my spirit sings of God my Saviour,  
for he has looked with love and favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all will call me blest,  
From now through all the coming ages.  
The Lord has done great things for me and holy is his name.

Sarah praying ... We pray for the humility to think of ourselves less in this time of great need.  
We pray for the essential workers, the unemployed, the houseless, those experiencing food scarcity, those who cannot be with their loved ones, those who are sick, and those who are living on the margins of society.

We pray for the students and staff at Martin Luther and Laurier, all of their families and loved ones, and those we long to hold again.

We trust that You are with us always and we commit to serve you and give you thanks by serving one another.

May our souls magnify the Lord.            R: Hear our prayer

As we await the coming of Christ, where do we encounter God's mercy and strength?

What is the encounter with God for those who find themselves "lowly"?

Mary's song of celebration goes on to expound on the nature and dispensation of God's mercy ... those who love, and those who are willing to serve are identified as the ones who are touched by God's mercy ...

Imagine this woman, she is not royalty, she is engaged to marry a carpenter, in a time where virginity was expected at the threshold of marriage ... yet her humility is such that she is able to recognize this embodied Spirit occupation in her womb as an act of service with God ... she is able to see this unrequested visitation of conception as an act of love with God.

One might think the mighty God of Abraham, Isaac and Moses would choose someone well known, someone with title, someone from a wealthy family to bear God's offspring ... but God finds the suitable vessel in this most humble of women ... the proud are scattered in their conceit.

By bringing God's flesh into the virgin Mary, the divine demonstrates a preferential option with the untitled, the poor working class, God lifts up the lowly, God fills those most hungry for the bread of life from the inside out with good things – God chooses from the poor, while the rich, or more accurately those who, in their pridefulness think they have it all - they are sent away empty ...

(singing the Magnificat ...)

His mercy touches those who love,  
and those who serve one another.  
And with his great strength he has scattered all the proud in their conceit.

He cast the mighty from their thrones,  
And he has lifted up the lowly.  
He fills the hungry with good things while others turn away.

Sarah praying ...

Lord we know you search for those who seek your love. We are here seeking your forgiveness, blessings and protections so that we may forgive, bless and protect those who need your love the most.

We ask that you journey with us as we prepare our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls in this advent season for the coming of our salvation.

Help us to remember when we cannot see the way that you have given your only son to save us and we can find peace in the spirit of Life and Truth.

May we use all that we are and all that we might be to serve and praise you.

May our souls magnify the Lord.            R: Hear our prayer.

To whom does the divine infant come? And why is he sent to be in our midst?

Divine memory is not wanting: God remembers the commitment made to Abraham and the commitment made to the children of God – I will be your God, and you will be my people.

God searches for those who seek God's love – searching them out, and finding them – blessing them, walking amongst them, forgiving them, protecting them.

It is to these, the humble and faithful people of God, that the divine infant comes ... the saviour of our world, Spirit of life and truth.

Through the servitude of Mary, God enters the world of flesh, establishing Godself in our midst, bearing hope and truth and light into everything, into fear, into hopelessness, into poverty of body and spirit,

This was true in Mary's time, and it is true today ...

The truth of God's presence with us lasts throughout time ...

It is indeed cause and reason: to use all that we are, all that we have and all that we might be capable of to magnify our Creator, and praise God forever more ...

(singing the Magnificat ...)

He comes to all who seek his love,  
For he remembers the promise  
That he had made to Abraham and to the children of God.

All glory be to God on high,  
And to his Son, God the Saviour  
And to the Spirit of life and truth that burns within our hearts.

Just as it was, it is today,  
And it shall last through all tomorrows,  
And so my soul magnifies the Lord, praise God forever. Amen.

Just as it was, it is today,  
And it shall last through all tomorrows,  
And so my soul magnifies the Lord, praise God forever. Amen.

The main wording of the prayer below came from a Thanksgiving message sent out by the Interim Executive Director of the Cambridge Shelter Corporation, Anne Tinker, in an email to staff and volunteers. Anne's message was not worded as a prayer – but her words sounded prayerful and appropriate to me. It captured so well the many things we have to be thankful for, that, with some additional intercessions, edits and Anne's permission I share some of her words in our prayers today.

### **A Thanksgiving Prayer:**

All-powerful God: You bless us in countless ways,  
Thereby showing your authority, your grace, your mercy and your boundless love.

We are thankful for the many blessings you give us:

We are thankful that we can turn on a tap and have clean water to drink, shower, or wash clothes, when so many in the world do not.

We are thankful for food in our cupboards and in our refrigerators when so many go hungry.

We are thankful that with a flick of a switch we have light or heat when so many have neither.

We are thankful for roofs over our heads, warm beds to sleep in, and a place to call home when numbers of those experiencing homelessness are climbing everywhere.

We are thankful to be part of an organization that works to serve others and to make our little corner of the world a better place.

Holy God:

Help us to remember to respond to your generosity mindful that we are created in your image and likeness.

Help us to make love our pandemic of choice: make us vectors of infectious love.

Where these times sow fear and insecurity, help us to sow faith, hope and joy.

Make us your instruments of justice, grace and mercy.

Rid us of judgmental attitudes and replenish our reservoirs of compassion.

Help us to live safely; reveal to us new and creative ways to come together in spirit and in solidarity.

We pray that you would also keep us in good spirits, as we feel the colder weather coming,  
And as we contend with the reality of rising infection rates ... please keep us in your care.  
We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

**Let us share the peace of Christ:**

The Peace of Christ be with you always, in your home and in mine, and throughout God's creation.

**Lord's Prayer:**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. **AMEN.**

**Sending Hymn: Arise, My Soul, Arise ELW 827, Bradley Moggach, Piano**

**Click here:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1V7AinwJHk>

Text: Johan Karl/ Tr. Ernest Ryden, Dale Wood; Finnish Folk Tune

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**Blessing:**

May God bless us and keep us.  
May the face of God shine upon us with grace and mercy.  
May God look upon us with favor  
and give us ☩ peace.  
Amen.

**Dismissal:** Go in Peace, Go in Hope. ***Thanks be to God.***

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