



NAYIRI KARJIAN, GENERAL MINISTER, LIVING WATER ASSOCIATION, OHIO NORTHEAST, UCC | DECEMBER 10, 2020

I often think about Advent as a time of pregnancy and gestation. Mary is not the only one pregnant, so are we.

Pregnancies are adventures. Many can be smooth and easy, others can have complications and difficulties. Mary herself did not have it easy as her life was disrupted by an angel bringing the most unusual news – *you will have a son, you'll name him Jesus*. Mary was shocked, afraid, surprised. What should she do? Found pregnant without a husband, her life would be in danger.

Joseph also faces complications. He too is living his life, minding his own business only to be interrupted by a dream with the news of Mary's pregnancy. Imagine the shock, the astonishment, the betrayal. What should he do? Should he change his plan?

I have no doubt that God likes surprises. It is we who are set in our ways, not God. We expect God to fit our conventional, ordinary worldviews doing only the predictable and the expected. But God is always about the unimaginable, the impossible, the Mystery.

Have you noticed that our faith story is filled with infertile women, who conceive miraculously? These women are critical to the future of the people and their story. Sarah was over the age of ninety when she conceived. Without Sarah, there would be no Isaac. Rebekkah was Infertile, without her there would be no Jacob. Hannah also was infertile, without her there would be no Samuel. Elizabeth was old when she conceived John the Baptist. These pregnancies were crucial to unfolding story of the people of Israel. Mary's pregnancy follows in the virgin birth, as miraculous as her ancestors'.

The virgin birth to me signifies - *God can do the impossible*. When we lose hope, when we despair, when we think nothing else can be done, God surprises us with the possibility of the impossible. The miracle is not in the virgin birth but in the possibilities within us, in the imagination that births a new way of being and living.

This Advent, especially during this time of COVID, we are all pregnant with possibility. Remember that the possibility of a new world is a constant theme in our biblical faith story. God is continually giving birth as all creation groans in labor pains. God is always doing a new thing – *Behold I make all things new. I create a new heaven and a new earth. The old is gone the new has come*. God is always pregnant with possibility and promise. That's who the God of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost is.

Today, during COVID Advent we too are pregnant as we prepare, wait, gestate, expect a new birth. We are pregnant in a world where all is changing and where there is no going back. We are pregnant to give birth to a new church, a new community, a new world. We are pregnant with new promise and new hope. Jesus continues to be gestated in us as we nurture the growing seed within us, so that on Christmas we can give birth to Baby Jesus, the hope, the joy, the love and the peace of a world.

For now, live fully paying attention to this incubation period of gestation within you. Eat well. Sleep well. Exercise well. Embrace healthy spiritual practices. Imagine. Envision. Anticipate. Prepare. Remove barrier and limitations of what you consider possible. Give thanks for this time of COVID Advent pregnancy. And remember, with God all things are possible!