

# Advent Devotional 2022

First Presbyterian Church of Auburn, Week of December 4th

## Preparing to Kneel in Bethlehem

*My prayer is that those of us who think that we're in charge of the world and the church will remember that the stable was filled with such as these: those who could not be kept from rejoicing!*

Throughout the pandemic, I longed to be inside this church on Sunday mornings—and on Thursdays, too, for church suppers and choir practice, rain or shine. I was grateful to our staff and our Session for their protective wariness and for the technology that allowed us to grow spiritually even as some of us sat in our pajamas in our homes, our church home empty and silent. But I longed to return.

Each Sunday for months now, ever since we could return to Thach Avenue for worship, I have watched our homecoming in progress, usually from the back of the sanctuary while waiting to process with the choir or from the choir loft during worship. I see hearty Presbyterian socialization, people delighted to chat with each other before Tyra performs the prelude on the organ that she reawakened only months ago. A growing body of worshipers praises God through song, sounding more confident and more committed as the weeks roll by. Some Sundays, there are barely enough seats in the choir loft. All that “noise” of worship assures me that if we are not yet completely “back,” we are getting there.

I hope that your best judgment will bring you to the sanctuary for worship throughout Advent, where you can help make the noise of worship, can raise hallelujahs on your way to Bethlehem, and, on Christmas Eve, can raise your lighted candle as you sing “Silent Night” with your church family—all of us in the same big room, “those who could not be kept from rejoicing!”

Terry Ley

## "Against Our Better Judgment"

We told her she couldn't go;  
she was too young  
to stay up that late.  
She told us that  
Baby Jesus would be there  
and he was younger than she.  
We told him he couldn't go;  
he was too old  
to brave the cold night air.  
He told us he'd rather greet heaven  
from the Christmas Eve service  
than be found slumped by the TV.  
So we bundled them up  
against the extreme cold  
against their own defenselessness  
against our better judgment  
and they went out with joy.  
My prayer is that those of us who think  
that we're in charge of the world and the church  
will remember that the stable was filled  
with such as these:  
those who could not be kept  
from rejoicing!

Ann Weems

## For Reflection

Isaiah 12:5-6

“Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

Questions:

- What song of praise to the Lord is rejoicing over and over in your mind during this season?
- Does it hold more meaning to sing it alone or to sing it with other rejoicers?

Prayer:

Merciful God, you come into our midst longing for communion with us, becoming one of us. You are our guide and ultimate assurance. We sing for joy that you are in our midst! Alleluia, Amen!