

## Worship Engagement and Devotion for week of December 5, 2021

READ Luke 1: 57-80, Philippians 1:3-11



### Close to Home Advent 2: Laying the Foundation (Peace)



When something hits close to home, it affects us deeply. During the Advent and Christmas season, we journey through scriptures and rituals that are tender, heavy with emotion, and vulnerable. We carry the memories and truths of this season close to our hearts. Close to Home acknowledges the “already but not yet” tension of our faith: Emmanuel is with us, and yet, God’s promised day—our everlasting home—is not fully realized. It names our deep longing for God to come close to us.

In the miraculous birth of John the Baptist, we see the foundation of what is to come. We see how interwoven his story is with Jesus’ origin story. When Zechariah regains his voice, his imagination is also restored. He offers deep praise for God’s tender mercy, and casts a hopeful vision for his own child. He sings blessings into John’s being. This lays the foundation for John’s life. In turn, John will go on to prepare the way for Jesus who will guide us all in the way of peace. In this week, we focus on making space—in our lives and our imaginations—for God’s blessings to break through.

### Questions for Reflection:

- What are the words, blessings, and actions that have laid the foundation for your life? Who helped lay a foundation of faith for you? How are you doing this for others?
- What are some specific acts that build a foundation of love?
- In her artist statement for “Berakah,” Hannah Garrity writes: “[Zechariah] could not speak until he decentered himself from the story. . . By removing his own personal and family legacy from the picture, he is truly able to give way to the greater narrative that God is calling him to participate in.”<sup>12</sup> In what ways might you practice surrender to fully participate in the greater work God is calling you into?
- Like Zechariah’s song, Paul’s letter to the Philippians is filled with blessing, gratitude, and tenderness. Paul prays that their “love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight” (v. 9). For Paul, the foundation of truth and wisdom is love—for God, for self, and for neighbor. This is how they will “determine what is best,” even in the midst of contentious and harrowing events—tensions, persecution, and Paul’s incarceration. In our community, how is love overflowing into wisdom and right action?

Adapted from Close to Home Sanctified Art | Sanctifiedart.org

### Spiritual Practice: Advent Candle Lighting, Second Week of Advent

The tradition of lighting the candles on the Advent Wreath is a favorite element of worship that symbolizes the passage of the four weeks of Advent and the celebration of the Christ Child on Christmas Eve. Advent wreaths are usually circular representing God’s never-ending love. At Faith United we use 3 purple candles and 1 pink for the four weeks of Advent. The pink candle is lit on the third week as a symbol of joy. The white candle is the Christ Candle and will be lit on Christmas Eve. Some traditions use 4 blue candles and 1 white.



The Advent Wreath is a tradition you can also use at home by making your own wreath! You can use garland, branches from your yard, clay or other art materials to form your wreath. Reading a scripture and reflection question can add to your personal or family devotion experience. **Learn more about the Advent Wreath** in Faith United’s Spiritual Practice 101 video series. [Click here](#) to view the Advent Wreath video.

### Candle Lighting Liturgy | The Candle of Peace *Written for two voices, this liturgy could be adapted for one, three or more.*

A: As we reflect on the foundation of our faith in our lives, we gather together around the candle of peace.

B: The home we long for is a home that knows peace—

A: peace that rests between us and our grief,

B: peace around our anxiety,

A: peace between us and our self-criticism,

B: peace amidst our relationships,

A: peace at the core of our being,

B: peace hovering through and in our world.

A: The home we long for is a home that knows peace.

B: So today we light the candle of peace—as a reminder and as a prayer.

A: Let it be so. Amen.

**Wonder:** What kind of peace are you longing for? How does your faith foundation help you to know peace and be an instrument of peace in the world?