

## Worship Engagement and Devotion for week of December 20, 2020

LUKE 1:26-45 | 2 SAMUEL 7:1-11, 16 | PSALM 89:1-4, 19-26

### Not Alone - Love, Those Who Dream Advent Week 4

Christmas Eve – LUKE 2:1-20 | ISAIAH 9:2-7, We Are Those Who Dream



*Psalm 126 opens with the line: "When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream." What does it look like to live as those who dream? The prophets, the psalmists, John the Baptist, Mary, Elizabeth, Joseph, Simeon, Anna, the shepherds and the Magi—they were all dreamers. They received, discovered, and responded to God's dreams for the world. In Advent, we step into the mystery and awe of God's dreams and pray they shape our reality.*

### Those Who Dream...Are Not Alone

This week, we recognize what preceded Mary's song of praise: news that was disorienting and bewildering, possibly threatening her life. Together, Mary and Elizabeth find courage and comfort in spite of their unusual circumstances. We, too, are called to carry, support, and encourage one another's dreams.

#### Questions for Reflection:

- What can we learn from Mary and Elizabeth about supporting each other? What comforts you when you feel alone?
- Who needs to know they are not alone? How can you be an instrument of God's love for those who are lonely, lost, grieving, isolated, discriminated, treated unjustly?

### We Are Those Who Dream

The Christmas story reminds us that we are all dreamers. Like those gathered around the manger, we come to this night each year with awe, wonder, and holy imagination for what is possible. Like Mary, we treasure God's dream in our hearts and commit to keeping it alive. Like the holy family, we believe and trust in a God who comes to us in the vulnerability of a child.

#### Questions for Reflection:

- How can we join the marginalized shepherds and hear the angel's announcement of Jesus' birth anew?
- How does what was happening in the world at the time of Jesus' birth connect with our world?
- What are your dreams for the world? How is God calling you to turn dreams of a loving, resourceful, hopeful, grace-filled, just, and peaceful world into reality?
- How can our dreams at the manger carry us forward to make a difference in the world?

### Spiritual Practice: Advent Candle Lighting, Fourth Week of Advent and Christmas Eve

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 responding to a reflection question with your thoughts, writing, or art can add to your personal or family devotion experience.

Another idea is to imagine the room in your home where you spend most of your time as a giant Advent wreath. As you light the candles each week, place each candle in a different corner of your room. The Christ candle can then be placed in the center of your room on Christmas Eve. Imagine Immanuel, God With Us, surrounding you and your loved ones with hope, peace, joy and love as we celebrate the coming of Christ.

The Candle liturgy for both the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve are included in this week's Worship Engagement Devotion.



## Candle Lighting Liturgy | 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday The Candle of Love

*Written for two voices, this liturgy could be adapted for one or even three or four.*

A: I dream of music that makes my heart swell.

B: I dream of trees that take my breath away.

A: I dream of sunrises that wrap me in light.

B: I dream of family dinners that feel like home.

A: I dream of church services that give me hope.

B: I dream of love as the default.

A: So today, as we draw near to Christmas day, we remember the candles of hope, peace, and joy and we light the candle of love.

*Light candle.*

B: May this light burn bright as a reminder that God is here and God is love.

A: We are not alone. Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.



*On Christmas Eve we light the Christ Candle, a white candle placed at the center of our wreath. As we light this candle we are reminded that God is with us and that Christ's light radiates in the world.*

## Candle Lighting Liturgy | The Christ Candle

*Written for two voices, this liturgy could be adapted for one or even three or four.*



A: In the beginning, God dreamed of a beautiful world.

B: In Egypt, the Israelites dreamed of freedom.

A: In the wilderness, the people dreamed of safety.

B: In Jerusalem, the people dreamed of a Messiah.

A: In Bethlehem, the shepherds and Wise Men dreamed of a new beginning.

B: Then, several years later, Jesus walked this earth and dreams came true.

A: The sick were healed.

A: The poor had food.

B: The forgotten and ignored were seen.

A: The children were welcomed.

B: Everyone was invited to the table, and the world has never been the same.

A: So tonight, we are those who dream.

B: Tonight, we dream the same dreams of our ancestors before us.

A: Tonight, we dream of justice and mercy, of love and kindness, of peace and hope.

B: Tonight, we dream of a God that draws near to us out of unfailing love.

*Light candle.*

A: May this candle be a reminder that there will be a day when every dream will be fulfilled.

And until then, we will be those who dream.

B: Let us worship Holy God.

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