

## Worship Engagement and Devotion for week of December 19, 2021

READ [Micah 5:2-5a](#) and [Luke 1:39-55](#)

### Close to Home Advent 4: Seeking Sanctuary (Love)



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.

After receiving the angel’s extraordinary news, Mary retreats to Elizabeth and Zechariah’s home to digest her new calling. She seeks refuge—physical safety and emotional protection. She receives a safe haven, a home for her heart to soon sing praise. Sanctuary and safe space is so crucial for everyone, especially the mother of Christ while she prepares to become a home for God. Sanctuary is anywhere God’s love dwells freely and abundantly.

### Questions for Reflection:

- What places, experiences, and metaphors define sanctuary for you? If you close your eyes, can you picture yourself there? Wherever it is, a place where God’s love dwells freely and abundantly is sanctuary. What are places and spaces of sanctuary for you? Who are the people in your life who provide safe refuge?
- As Mary seeks and finds refuge in Elizabeth’s embrace, she, in turn, becomes a sanctuary for God. Also known as the theotokos, Mary is the “God-bearer,” the dwelling place of God. When we receive safe refuge, we have the capacity to provide sanctuary for others. In what ways is your faith community providing sanctuary, becoming a space where God’s love dwells freely and abundantly?
- In her artist statement for “Redemption Song,” Rev. T. Denise Anderson writes: “I’ve read the Magnificat many times, but only recently have I started reading it for what it is: a protest song. Listen to the tone: ‘[God] has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.’ It’s a song of vindication against oppressive powers.” Where do you hear similar songs of redemption and resistance?

Adapted from Close to Home Sanctified Art | Sanctifiedart.org

### Spiritual Practice: Advent Candle Lighting, Third 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 Love *Written for two voices, this liturgy could be adapted for one, three or more.*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| A: God’s love is like an open door.  | B: God’s love is the streetlight that guides us home.            |
| A: God’s love is a warm bed to fall into.  | B: God’s love is a table with room for you.                      |
| A: God’s love is a crackling fireplace.  | B: God’s love is the sun that streams through the windows.       |
| A: God’s love is the roof over our heads and the floor beneath our feet.   |  |
| B: God’s love is a home for you and me, for neighbors and strangers, for family and friends, for enemies and partners. |  |
| A: God’s love is a home for all.   | B: Today we light the candle of love to remind us of this truth. |
| A: May it burn brightly in this space and even brighter in our hearts. Amen.   |  |

**Wonder Together:** What is God’s love like for you?

300 NINTH STREET NW, NORTH CANTON, OHIO 44720, [www.myfaithunited.org](http://www.myfaithunited.org)