



DEVOTIONAL ART FOR  
ADVENT - EPIPHANY

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*curated by*  
Great Bay Anglican Church



COVER ART:

# Mary & Joseph


*by Stephanie Gehring*



Great Bay Anglican Church  
*Dover, NH*



# Advent *One*



The hour has already  
come for you to wake  
up from your slumber,  
because our salvation is  
nearer now than when  
we first believed. The  
night is nearly over; the  
day is almost here.



## Isaiah 2:1-5

This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw  
concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

In the last days  
the mountain of the Lord's temple will be  
established  
as the highest of the mountains;  
it will be exalted above the hills,  
and all nations will stream to it.  
Many peoples will come and say,  
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the  
Lord,  
to the temple of the God of Jacob.  
He will teach us his ways,  
so that we may walk in his paths."  
The law will go out from Zion,  
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.  
He will judge between the nations  
and will settle disputes for many peoples.  
They will beat their swords into plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks.  
Nation will not take up sword against nation,  
nor will they train for war anymore.

Come, descendants of Jacob,  
let us walk in the light of the Lord.

# Is 2:1-5

by David Mugire



## COLLECT

by Rev. Brandon Walsh

Almighty God, in whom the whole of our Hope rests, deliver us, your people, from the shadows of darkness and despair which threaten to block our vision of you and your Kingdom's coming. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, such that our bodies and lives make visible New Creation, beating swords into plowshares, declaring your victory and shalom wherever we go. We ask this, in the name of your Son, our Lord, Christ Jesus. Amen

# A villanelle *meditation* on Isaiah 2:4b-5

by Dcn. Anna A. Friedrich

*“They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.”*

If ever ploughs were needed, it is now —  
the clay of humankind is cracked and dry  
from war, neglect — we need a Gardener’s plough

to work the earth, disrupt, make way, allow  
a space for hidden life to multiply —  
if ever ploughs were needed, it is now.

The Gardener sows the seed, He prunes the bough.  
More sap — his one desire; More green! His cry.  
A different violence — from the Gardener’s plough,

that cultivates the land — ensures His vow  
to make things new, undo all that’s awry —  
if ever ploughs were needed, it is now.

Join me, the Gardener says, I’ll show you how  
to scatter seeds, then trust, that though they die  
they now can live — because the Gardener’s plough

went deeper still. The sweat upon His brow  
is not in vain, He lives to beautify.  
If ever ploughs were needed, it is now —  
Lay down your plans. Pick up a gardener’s plough.



## Psalm 122

*A song of ascents. Of David.*

- 1 I rejoiced with those who said to me,  
“Let us go to the house of the Lord.”
- 2 Our feet are standing  
in your gates, Jerusalem.
- 3 Jerusalem is built like a city  
that is closely compacted together.
- 4 That is where the tribes go up—  
the tribes of the Lord—  
to praise the name of the Lord  
according to the statute given to Israel.
- 5 There stand the thrones for judgment,  
the thrones of the house of David.
- 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:  
“May those who love you be secure.
- 7 May there be peace within your walls  
and security within your citadels.”
- 8 For the sake of my family and friends,  
I will say, “Peace be within you.”
- 9 For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,  
I will seek your prosperity.

# Visual Art by David Mugire



## *A Sonnet Meditation on Psalm 122*

*by Dcn. Anna A. Friedrich*

*I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD.' Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem.*

Now where's God's house? In heaven, or on earth —  
Temple of all creation at the start —  
Where God and priests delight to be, to work —  
Where Father, Son & Spirit share their heart —  
Could sin or flood unmake this house of God?  
No, steady is the ladder Jacob saw  
that joins the realms where God and humans trod.  
A tent became God's home — by grace and law  
till Temple stone made still the house of God.  
But promised — Light! All nations, Come! In awe  
of Yahweh — still to come in flesh and blood —  
Now ladder? Not on land, on Son of God,  
who beckons us, destroys the fatal flaw —  
Oh Cornerstone! Make us the house of God.



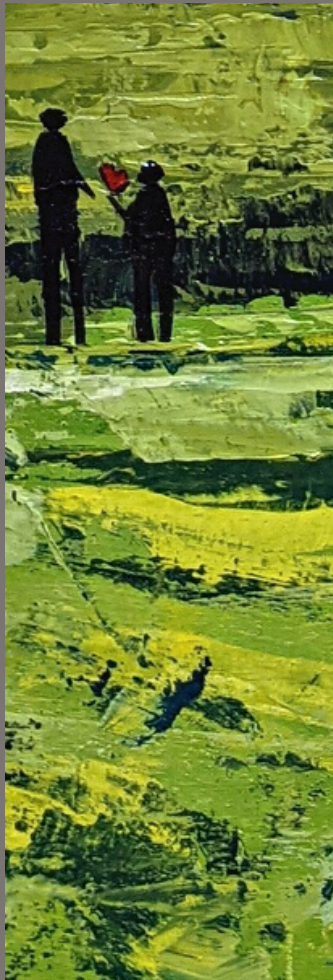
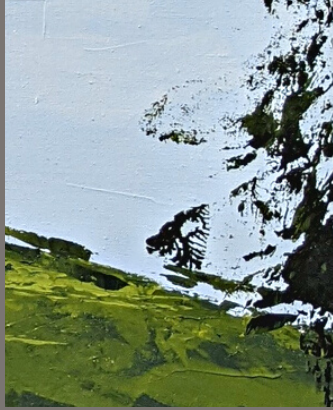
## Romans 13:8-14

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

# Spread Love

by David Mugire



## A Brighter Danger

by Rebecca Faulks

In the night, certain dangers  
find a certain safety. Shadows  
rush, emboldened  
to act with darkened dexterity,  
leveraging the lowlight  
to hide shame and sorrow and sinister rage –  
arousing appetites,  
repeating rituals to numb, heighten, consume,  
survive.

The fingers of dawn tighten, brightening pink –  
shadows scatter.

It is too painful  
to see, too terrifying  
to name the naked wounds  
the night helped us ignore.

The sun rises, glimmering with love,  
discarding our darkness,  
offering to clothe with  
courage and true care.

Do I dare wake –  
rise and walk  
under the wings of this  
mysterious and healing light?



## Matthew 24:29-44

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding oat the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

### THE COLLECT FOR ADVENT I

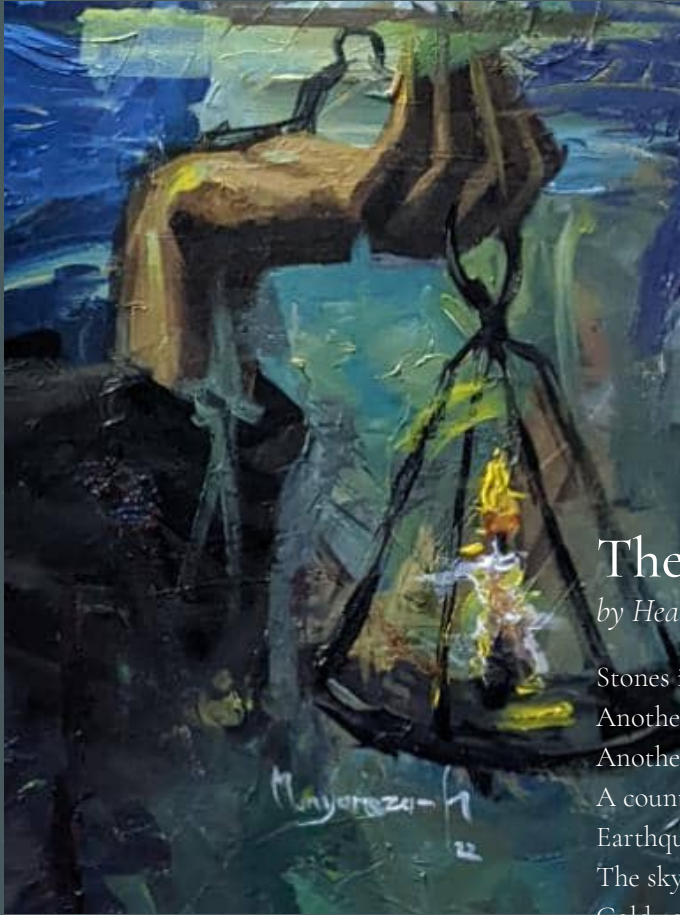
*Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

# Matthew



24:29-44

BY HENRY MUNYANEZA



## The Day of Reckoning

by Heather Kaufmann

Stones in a rubble heap  
Another bomb falling on Jerusalem  
Another storming of the capital  
A country pitted against itself  
Earthquake famine plague  
The sky bright with a bloody sunset  
Cold concrete alone on a prison floor  
An officer's knee against his neck  
My closest friend betraying me  
My mother hating me

*Look to his face now*

*He will keep you safe*

The border is the enemy time to flee  
Woe to wombs and unweaned children  
For all is trampled taken torn  
Mourn the moon and stars now flashing  
Floodwaters rising breakers crashing  
All is fainting fear foreboding

The Son of Man on a cloud

Now coming

*Look to his face*

# Advent *Two*



The wolf *will* live with  
the lamb, the leopard  
*will* lie down with the  
goat, the calf and the  
lion and the yearling  
together; and a little  
child *will* lead them.



## Isaiah 11:1-10

### *The Branch From Jesse*

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;  
 from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.  
 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—  
 the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,  
 the Spirit of counsel and of might,  
 the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—  
 and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.  
 He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,  
 or decide by what he hears with his ears;  
 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,  
 with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the  
 earth.  
 He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;  
 with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.  
 Righteousness will be his belt  
 and faithfulness the sash around his waist.  
 The wolf will live with the lamb,  
 the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
 the calf and the lion and the yearling together;  
 and a little child will lead them.  
 The cow will feed with the bear,  
 their young will lie down together,  
 and the lion will eat straw like the ox.  
 The infant will play near the cobra's den,  
 and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.  
 They will neither harm nor destroy  
 on all my holy mountain,  
 for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord  
 as the waters cover the sea.  
 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the  
 peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place  
 will be glorious. In that day the Lord will reach out his  
 hand a second time to reclaim the surviving remnant of  
 his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper  
 Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from  
 Hamath and from the islands of the Mediterranean.

# The Arborist

*by Tim Murray*

He laid his ax to my heart decayed  
Splayed my rotten roots  
Self-severed from that rivulet which  
Fed me ere I knew  
He'd set me there where I, grounded, found  
Fertile earth to hold  
And shot up into the April air,  
A sapling green and gold.

At the first red limb-rending burn  
I, double bent, near blinded  
Heard him whisper that the severing  
Was serving me, though why  
A knife-edge, a taking, should make  
For more of me, I wondered  
Season came, season passed, and  
My freedom, I desired:

To set out for the sky and the sun  
And flee his horrid knife  
Pry myself from my soil-cell sentence  
Reach spire-heights, but I  
Knew not the end to which I strove,  
Strained my wooden veins  
Slow, I watched my oaken husk  
Hollowed, hollowed. He came

And laid his ax to my heart decayed  
Splayed my rotten roots  
Self-severed from that fertile earth which  
Fed me ere I knew it  
Now gray grows my memory  
A stump of a stump, and know  
That he never said how knife, nor ax  
Should make a living oak.

Only this: through my closing eyes  
I thought I saw a shoot  
Of a color I had nearly forgotten  
Sprung from root under root



# Is. II

by David Mugire



# Psalm 72

*Deus, iudicium*

- 1 Give the King your judgments, O God, \*  
and your righteousness to the King's son.
- 2 Then shall he judge your people with righteousness \*  
and defend the poor with justice.
- 3 The mountains also shall bring peace, \*  
and the little hills righteousness to the people.
- 4 He shall vindicate the poor among the people, \*  
defend the children of the poor, and punish the wrongdoer.
- 5 They shall fear you as long as the sun and moon endure, \*  
from one generation to another.
- 6 He shall come down like the rain upon the mown grass, \*  
even as showers that water the earth.
- 7 In his time shall the righteous flourish, \*  
even an abundance of peace, so long as the moon endures.
- 8 His dominion shall be also from one sea to the other, \*  
and from the river unto the world's end.
- 9 Those who dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before him; \*  
his enemies shall lick the dust.
- 10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall give presents; \*  
the kings of Arabia and Seba shall bring gifts.
- 11 All kings shall fall down before him; \*  
all nations shall do him service.
- 12 For he shall deliver the poor when he cries, \*  
the needy also, and the one that has no helper.
- 13 He shall be favorable to the lowly and needy, \*  
and shall preserve the lives of the poor.
- 14 He shall deliver them from falsehood and wrong, \*  
and dear shall their blood be in his sight.
- 15 Long may he live! And unto him shall be given the gold  
of Arabia; \*  
prayer shall ever be made unto him, and daily shall he  
be blessed.
- 16 There shall be an abundance of grain on the earth, thick  
upon the hilltops; \*  
its fruit shall flourish like Lebanon, its grain like the grass  
upon the earth.
- 17 His Name shall endure for ever; his Name shall remain  
as long as the sun. \*  
All the nations shall be blessed through him and  
shall call him blessed.
- 18 Blessed be the LORD God, even the God of Israel, \*  
who alone does wondrous things;
- 19 And blessed be the Name of his majesty for ever; \*  
and all the earth shall be filled with his majesty.  
Amen, Amen.

# The king and the King of Kings

by *Emily Friend*

A father's fervent blessing on his son's kingship,  
prophecies this same father's blessing on The Son's Lordship.  
The Messiah, yes, this is who King David speaks of.  
Maybe without even fully knowing.

"Help him to:  
defend the poor."

And He did.

"To rescue the children of the needy."

And He did.

"To crush their oppressors."

And He did.

O God of all kings and kingdoms,  
temporary, and eternal.  
Kingdoms restricted by the limits of geography,  
and The Kingdom that knows no bounds.

You alone are the mighty, everlasting, victorious, and glorious one.  
You are the God of covenant love and faithfulness.  
For in your mercy, your blessings were made known to your son  
David,  
And to his Son, King Solomon.  
And these same blessings will live on eternally  
In the life of your Son.

Glory be to the Father  
and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit.

# The Advent

*by Connor Wood*

There was upon a time such flash of green.  
The summer sun erupted like a flute;  
The days edged lazy by, ripened fruit  
Toward autumn. All ordinary and unseen

The growth of things, bright their hidden life,  
Blood and sap and root; but came then turn  
Of sun and star, and so the maple burns:  
Dormant the turtles are, and the alewife.

Christ then come into the world, aglow  
In folding year, all violet the dusk  
As candle flame, one by one; but not yet

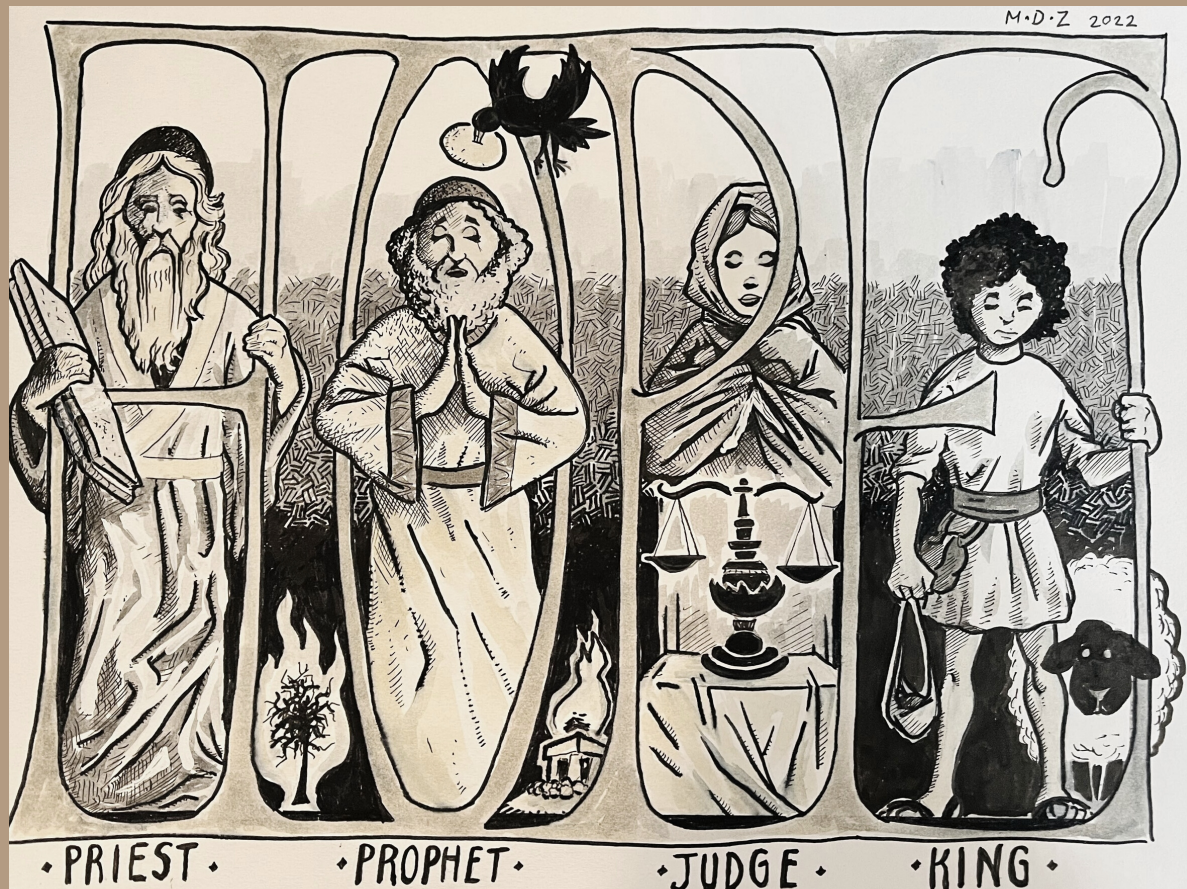
All of light. The gathering is bare and slow.  
The land be virgin-like; then pecks of snow get  
White from violet-rose: glory from the husk.

## Romans 15:1-13

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name." Again, it says, "Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people." And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him." And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope." May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

# Untitled

by Matthew David Zelic



May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.





## Matthew 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’” John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

### **THE COLLECT FOR ADVENT II**

Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and the comfort of your holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

# The Proclamation

by Heather Kaufmann

Dust billows at our every step  
our finger pads and nostrils  
lined with the grit of it  
as we wend our way  
through alpine undergrowth  
towards the First Brother's peak.  
Things are not as they should be:  
the grass gone coarse  
and sharp as wire  
the horizon a haze of smoke  
threatening to choke  
our lungs in past neglect.  
Close to the summit now  
a voice ahead calls "fire"  
and we run to the cliff's edge,  
see an ashen cloud now rising  
over the next ridge, its tips  
bone-white against unnatural blue.  
Bright beacons flare erratic  
at its base and a plane flies  
like a thirsting mosquito in and out  
of the swelling mass of cloud—  
there is no baptism big enough  
for this unquenchable flame.

And will there be  
a bigger baptism  
a greater flame  
whose crucible earth  
will birth a fruit  
more ripe and red  
than the brightest blaze  
we've yet to know?

Here (now)  
we pray for rain.

*Prepare  
the way  
for the  
Lord,  
make  
straight  
paths for  
him.*

## PROPER PREFACE FOR ADVENT

*Because thou didst send thy beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.*

# Matthew 3:1-12

by Henry Munyaneza



# Advent *Three*



“Are you the one  
who is to come, or  
should we expect  
someone else?”

# ADV ENT III



## ISAIAH 35

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God. Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and those the LORD has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

# ISAIAH



BY ELISSA LINCOLN

35

## COLLECT FOR ADVENT III

O Lord Jesus Christ, you sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise make ready your way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient toward the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world, we may be found a people acceptable in your sight; for with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## Strengthen the weak hands...

*by Rebecca Faulks*

Age does not reverse,  
nor does injury evaporate.  
Scars ripple and remind, tracing stories of sorrow.  
Hands come up empty, lonely  
with disappointment;  
joints grieve and groan,  
wrestling desire and decay.  
Yet the shakiest sage is steadied with anchoring warmth  
beneath the reflexive curling of an infant's grasp –  
the strength of their slight presence  
raises a canopy of peace.  
Dignity is suspended in the tension of dependence;  
hope is beheld in the hand of another.

# ADV ENT III



## PSALM 146

Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, my soul. I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God. He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them— he remains faithful forever. He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free, the LORD gives sight to the blind, the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down, the LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked. The LORD reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.



# As Long as I Live

by Emily Jane Friend

*Ancient theologians recognized that the phonetics of God's name, YHWH, sounded like the rising and falling of our chests in the most basic human function: breathing. And thus, they determined that our breath can actually be a guide for our prayer life. We can remain intimately connected with our Creator even amidst the most mundane movements of our body.*

[inhale] Yah-  
[exhale] weh

*Yahweh*

Yahweh.

O God, giver of life, giver of breath.

We declare you present in the rising and falling of our chests,  
the contracting of our lungs,  
the inhale and the exhale.

And we declare you worthy of all the glory, honor, and praise  
that every breath we breathe, be an offering to you

That every last word we utter, speak of you.

For you are eternal, everlasting, and permanent.

You will remain.

Even when our breath is gone,  
and therefore we are gone.

Along with all our unfinished plans for this life.

Your reign will continue on,

Just as it has in the life of your Son.

For it is He who Created.

It is He who embodied Justice and Freedom.

It is He who gave sight to the blind  
and dignified the orphan, the widow-  
the Samaritan, the tax collector.

Yes, it was Jesus.

And yes, it is Jesus who will remain.

Our breath- be it deep, long, weary, or short,  
Will one day cease to exist.

We will one day exhale, and never inhale.

And still, He will remain.

Yes, he will remain.

[inhale] Yah-  
[exhale] weh

*Yahweh*





# ADV ENT III

## JAMES 5:7-20

Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

# Peanuts in June

*by Dcn. Anna A. Friedrich*

*A meditation on James 5:7-20, regarding a patient farmer:*

Chock-full of vigor,  
our fixture of fervor  
now shuffles,  
stoop-shouldered.

Skin, smooth and pink  
reduced to a patch  
of cancer,  
stretched over a frame.

Between sunup and sundown  
his muscle worked a shovel,  
dehorned cattle,  
swam the Blackwater,  
paddled the Colorado,  
grated sweet potatoes,  
held his wife.

Tell me, what was it like to plow behind a mule?  
Tell me why you love the land so.  
Tell me, where did all that muscle go?

You spent it.  
Like your lungs, now taking your last breath —  
you turned it into adventure  
you turned it in for years of laughing,  
light in your eyes — dancing  
with your only partner, in the airport parking lot.

You wore it out, planted  
your own muscle in the sandy soil  
of that Sunset View —  
planted it deep,  
on into death.

For 89 years  
we watched it bloom,  
like peanuts in June.

# Prayerful Waiting

by Emily Jane Friend

I'm not a naturally patient person.  
I know this because when I wait, I feel it in my bones.  
I feel the heart-wrenching, aching, anger-inducing pains of my precious time  
being wasted right before my eyes. And I feel trapped and powerless.  
I anxiously tap my fingernails on the counter at the UPS store as I wait for my package.  
I switch from a lane with three cars to a lane with two cars at a traffic light.  
I internally roll my eyes at the incompetence of the Starbucks barista  
who makes my drink wrong the first time.  
I'm embarrassed by how many times I've thought things like: I could do it so much better.  
And I cringe as I write that because such a statement reeks with pride.  
But it's true.

I wish I could tell you that my thoughts while I wait are filled with kindness, peace, patience,  
and all the other fruits of the Spirit.  
But most of the time, they're not.  
And I think that's because sometimes I let my internal Pharaoh speak more loudly than  
the voice of the Holy Spirit.  
And my internal Pharaoh tells me that I am what I produce.  
That I was made to consume.  
That I am nothing if not efficient.  
And so I trade in my freedom for the bondage of slavery again.  
Slavery to the god of productivity and the illusion of control.

And how completely different is the God we serve?  
For he is unhurried.

His grace is slow and long.

He is patient with me when I snap at my husband.

He shows me mercy when I think I can do it better.

And my pride cannot help but evaporate in the light of his loving kindness.

James 5 tells us to wait and pray.

To wait and pray, when we are in the midst of deep, painful suffering, or when our hearts are  
bursting with praise and thankfulness.

"Be patient, as you wait for the Lord's return."

"Consider the farmers. Consider the prophets, Consider Job."

All are people who waited, in the midst of uncertainty and fear- even fear for their lives.

And while they waited, they prayed. They prayed for God to bring the harvest when the time is right.

And He did- "the Lord was kind to each of them in the end"- for he gave them fruit, freedom, and  
family.

"For the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy."

To be a Christian is to be a people who wait.

We wait for God's kingdom to rule in fullness.

We wait for Christ to dwell with us face to face.

Just as Mary was expecting for the 9 months she carried God in her body,

We too are expectant for the coming of God.

And while we wait, we will pray.

# ADV ENT III



## MATTHEW 11:2-19

When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.” As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: “‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. Whoever has ears, let them hear. “To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: “‘We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”

# MATTHEW 11



BY HENRY MUNYANEZA

# Advent *Four*



All this took place to  
*fulfill what the Lord  
had said* through the  
prophet: "The virgin  
will conceive and  
give birth to a son,  
and they will call  
him *Immanuel*"

# Advent

## *Four*

### Isaiah 7:10-17

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. The LORD will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria!"

"Behold, the  
virgin shall  
conceive  
and bear a  
son, and  
shall call his  
name  
*Immanuel.*  
He shall eat  
curds and  
honey when  
he knows  
how to *refuse*  
*the evil* and  
*choose the*  
*good...."*



# The Test and the Sign:

By Emily Jane Friend

I am fiercely jealous of King Ahaz.  
“Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz.”  
Oh, how I would love, a clear, audible, and  
direct exchange with the Lord like that.

*“Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the  
deepest depths or the highest heights.”*

Oh, how I would love an invitation from the  
Lord like that.  
An invitation from God’s mouth to witness the  
external manifestation of God’s sovereign glory.  
With my own eyes.

This is what the wicked King Ahaz gets? And  
yet, how does he respond?

*“But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put  
the Lord to the test.”*

I feel my blood rising.  
Why, oh why, Ahaz, would you refuse such a  
generous offer from the Lord?  
You were not a good king!  
You were not holy and faithful and therefore  
refusing because you don’t need God to prove  
anything to you.

And yet, I feel the Holy Spirit gently remind  
me  
that I am more like this wicked king than I’d  
like to admit.  
For there is a tragic irony in the brokenness of  
the human condition: All too often, we forget,  
or even ignore the intimate reality of God’s  
presence when we need it the most.

We do it all the time:  
We deny the mysterious intimacy of his  
presence in the bread and the wine.  
In the waters of baptism.  
In the union of marriage.  
In the voice of the stranger in Homegoods who  
speaks a word of encouragement and  
affirmation over a subject I am at war with, in  
the deepest depths of my mind and heart.  
We refuse the free gift of God’s presence right  
before us.

This is how I imagine God’s tone in response to  
Ahaz’s refusal of a sign:  
“You’re refusing a sign?  
I’ll give it to you anyways.  
But Ahaz, this is so much bigger than you.  
So, so much bigger than you.”  
Because King Ahaz, this is your problem:  
(Well, your biggest problem),  
You lack a prophetic vision.  
You are unable to see beyond your particular  
moment in history.  
You are trapped in the limits of temporality  
and unable to see into the limitless eternity of  
the  
Kingdom’s inauguration in these words spoken  
to you.

So when he thinks he hears of deliverance  
He hears that for a time, God is going to  
deliver Judah into safety from war.  
But oh, King Ahaz, this is so much bigger than  
you.  
For God will bring deliverance to all people for  
all of eternity  
in the miracle of Immanuel.  
He is the true sign of freedom and safety.  
Of hope and peace.  
So go on, King Ahaz,  
Ask the Lord for a sign.  
For it is so, so much bigger than you.  
For it is through Immanuel  
That God will sanctify his name.  
Immanuel is coming.  
Yes, he is coming.

# Advent

## Four

### Psalm 24

*Domini est terra*

- <sup>1</sup> The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it, \*  
the compass of the world and those who dwell therein.
- <sup>2</sup> For he has founded it upon the seas \*  
and established it upon the rivers of the deep.
- <sup>3</sup> Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? \*  
Or who shall stand in his holy place?
- <sup>4</sup> He who has clean hands and a pure heart, \*  
and who has not set his mind upon vanity, nor sworn  
to deceive his neighbor.
- <sup>5</sup> He shall receive blessing from the LORD \*  
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.
- <sup>6</sup> This is the generation of those who seek him, \*  
even of those who seek your face, O God of Jacob.
- <sup>7</sup> Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be lifted up,  
you everlasting doors; \*  
and the King of glory shall come in.
- <sup>8</sup> "Who is the King of glory?" \*  
"It is the LORD, strong and mighty, even the LORD,  
mighty in battle."
- <sup>9</sup> Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be lifted up,  
you everlasting doors; \*  
and the King of glory shall come in.
- <sup>10</sup> "Who is the King of glory?" \*  
"The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory."

# Psalm 24

*by Denisa Nica*

Lord,  
I want to wake up  
with a body  
only made out of  
clean hands  
and a naked heart.  
This way, my feet  
can take me  
to flowing lands  
of milk and honey  
and the mountain  
where you are.

*by Nick Friend*



# Advent *Four*

## Romans 1:1-7

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people

*And you  
Gentiles  
belong to*

COLLECT FOR ADVENT IV

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and as we are sorely hindered by our sins from running the race that is set before us, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

*also are among those  
who are called to  
Jesus Christ.*

# Advent

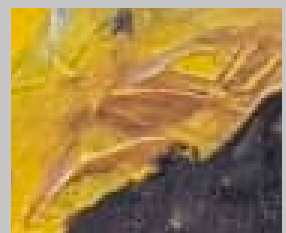
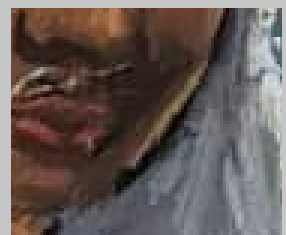
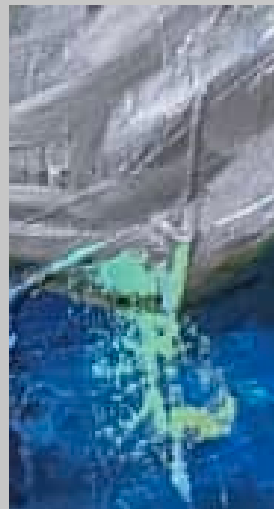
## *Four*

### Matthew 1:18-25

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

# Matthew 1:18-25

by Henry Munyaneza



# Christmastide

## *One*



Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, “Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”





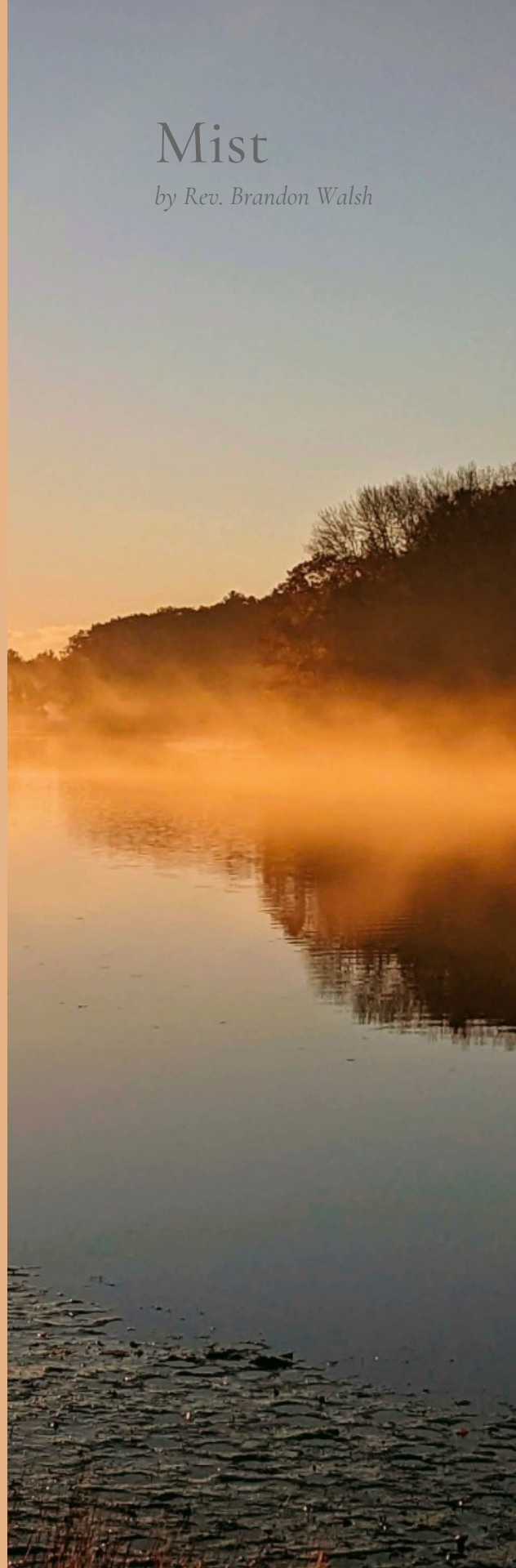
# Mist

*by Rev. Brandon Walsh*

## Dawn Oracle

*by Heather Kaufmann*

It is now: the dawn is breaking  
in the crowning of an infant's head  
whose cries mingle with the chorus  
of cows and lambs calling in the light.  
The light of the dawn indwells us  
like a child in the womb  
of his laboring mother, who  
burns with a hope beyond pain.  
This is the light which guides us  
through the solitary darkness  
of death or the dread of being left  
and on with faltering feet to what end  
we cannot know  
until the clouds clear  
to reveal we've been together  
    all along  
in a vast green field  
the bright star still shining  
above our unbelieving heads.



# Us

by Emily Jane Friend

For *to us* a child is born  
To *us* a son is given.  
Look at Him!

The tiny, middle eastern, Jewish baby  
Coming *to us*, covered in the blood and amniotic fluid  
Of the body of a teenage virgin.  
She labors to bring Him *to us*.  
Him whose own body will break, with blood flowing  
For *us*.

Hallelujah! He comes *for us*.  
For me and for you.  
Our Savior comes with salvation *for us*.  
Our Advocate comes to advocate *for us*.  
Our Healer comes with healing *for us*.  
His Being is His coming.  
And His coming is *for us*.  
For the Jew, the Greek, the Gentile, the Man, the Woman.  
The Orphan, the Widow, the Adulteress, the Tax Collector.  
He comes *for us*,  
For the life of the world.  
And oh, he is  
With *us*.

Immanuel.  
You are God *with us*.  
The Eternal Word made flesh.  
The fleshy God.  
With *us*.  
He laughed.  
For He is *with us* in our joy.  
He cried.  
For He is *with us* in our grief.  
Thanks be to God that He is eternally *with us*.  
Because He chose to dwell  
In *us*.

Yes, you were pleased to dwell *in us*.  
In the person of the Holy Spirit.  
Our life and breath,  
Is your own life *in us*.  
You are in our standing and our kneeling,  
our coming and our going.  
You are the Light *in us*.  
You are the song *in us*.  
Our prayer is for your ever increase *in us*.

To *us*.  
For *us*.  
With *us*.  
In *us*.

This is our story.  
And this is our Hope.

# Christmastide I

## Psalm 24

Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth! Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength! Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts! Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth! Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity." Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.

You are so good,  
I want to explode my joy  
in a thousand pieces  
and scatter your glory  
all over the earth.

*by Denisa Nica*





# Christmastide I

## Titus 2:11-14

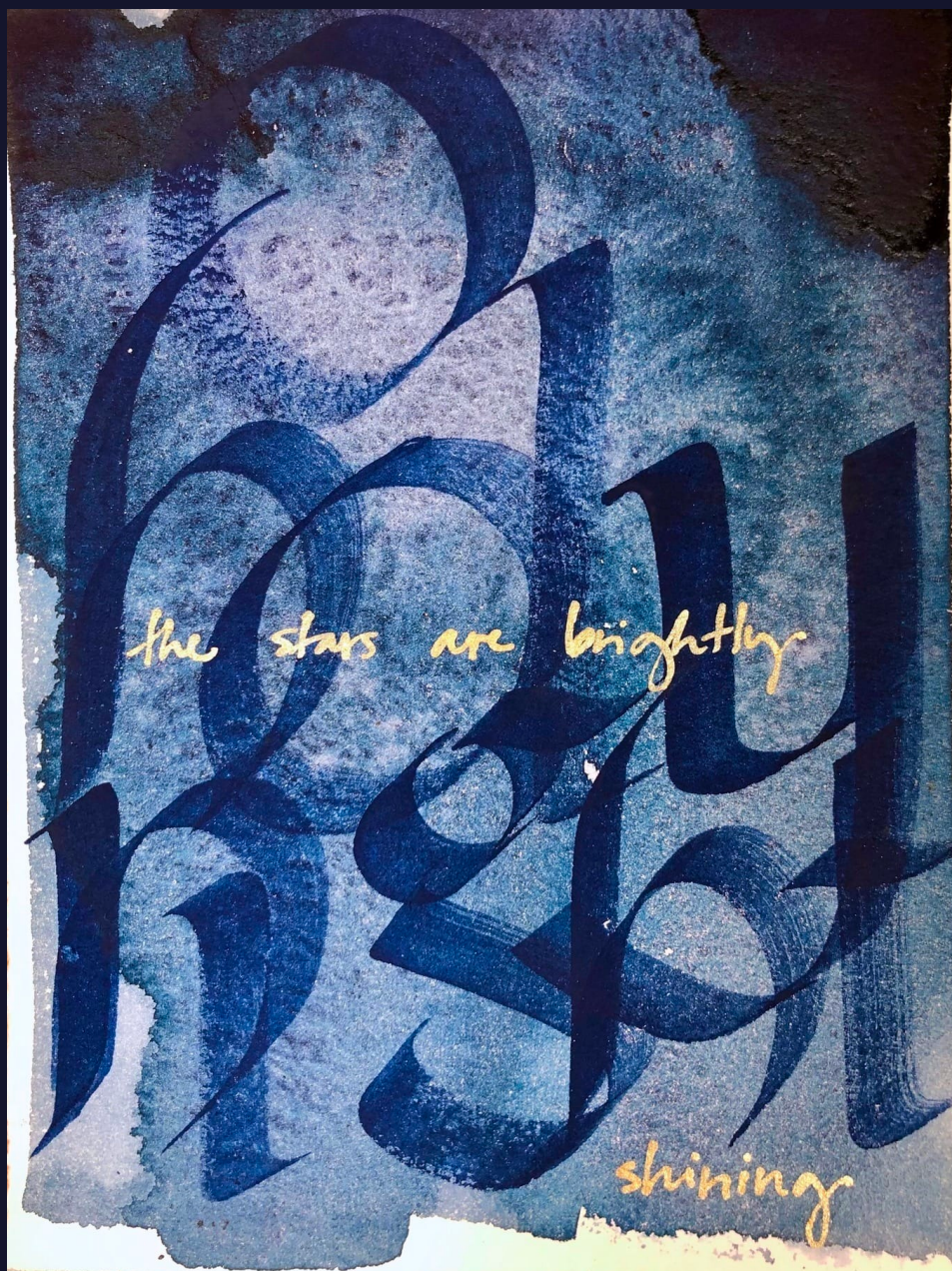
For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

*waiting  
for our  
blessed  
hope, the  
appearing  
of the  
glory of  
our great  
God and  
Savior  
Jesus  
Christ*

## COLLECT

*by Emily Jane Friend*

Most merciful God, you have graciously given us victory over the desires of the flesh through our salvation, which comes to us through the miracle of redemption made known in the life, death, and resurrection of your only Son, Jesus Christ; through him we are made new and therefore able to walk in the counsel of the Holy Spirit, who is faithful to lead us, in this life, towards what is good and away from that which separates us from you, and to empower us to press on in faithfulness as we wait for our blessed hope- the coming to us of our Almighty God, in the fullness of his glory. All glory, praise, and honor be ever to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.



O Holy Night  
*by Stephanie Gehring*



# Christmastide I

## Luke 2:1-20

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.

And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in highest heaven,  
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.



# Luke 2:1-7

by Henry Munyaneza



## Stretched

by Rev. Brandon Walsh

The Word.  
Compelling.  
Stretching.  
Pulling us taught, beyond our comfort,  
And yet Firm  
Fast  
True  
To be wholly extended out  
To the full breadth and length  
Of who we might become- enacted  
The notes of a song we are learning;  
but do not yet fully know  
Longing awakens in us  
Hope becoming palpable  
In our fingers. In our hands. In our  
feet.  
All pressed outward to the edges  
The Word made flesh in us.

# Luke 2:8-20

by Henry Munyaneza



## The Shepherd's Canticle

By Heather Kaufmann

*St. Thomas Mission, Vancouver, BC*

Like the shepherds we jerk awake  
to a trumpet crash of sound  
each Sunday at 5:20 PM

*GLORY!*

the cantor begins and our eyes snap upwards  
from prayerbooks, starlight flashing  
through the wood-slatted ceiling

*Is He here?*

we whisper on the inhale, the sudden  
brightness dazzling our sight  
to a squint as we join in the chorus

*to God in the highest*

voices wavering through capacious air  
to rest on vacant pews from whence  
returns the celestial echo

*peace to His people on earth*

our trembling soothed by the fluff  
of sheep-wool against the damp December air  
as we rehearse again your coming

*Lord God, Lamb of God*

each week so unexpected that the far-flung stars  
should serenade us in the belly of a borrowed  
church with words we waited and wept for

*peace to His people on earth*

# Christmastide

## *Two*



With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

# Christmastide TWO

## JEREMIAH 31:7-14

This is what the LORD says: “Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations. Make your praises heard, and say, ‘LORD, save your people, the remnant of Israel.’ See, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labor; a great throng will return. They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back. I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because I am Israel’s father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son. “Hear the word of the LORD, you nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: ‘He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.’ For the LORD will deliver Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they. They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the LORD—the grain, the new wine and the olive oil, the young of the flocks and herds. They will be like a well-watered garden, and they will sorrow no more. Then young women will dance and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow. I will satisfy the priests with abundance, and my people will be filled with my bounty,” declares the LORD.





They will be like a  
*well-watered*  
garden, and they  
will sorrow no  
more. Then  
young women  
will dance and be  
glad, young men  
and old as well. I  
will turn their  
*mourning into*  
*gladness*; I will give  
them comfort  
and joy instead of  
sorrow. I will  
satisfy the priests  
with abundance,  
and my people  
will be filled with  
my bounty,”  
*declares the*  
LORD

Jeremiah 31:7-14  
*by Elissa Lincoln*

# Christmastide TWO

## P S A L M 84

How lovely is your dwelling place, LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young— a place near your altar, LORD Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion. Hear my prayer, LORD God Almighty; listen to me, God of Jacob. Look on our shield, O God; look with favor on your anointed one. Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. LORD Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you.

Lord,  
if I could take  
all my earth days  
and lay them flat  
on the ground,  
in a string of  
polaroid moments,  
I would build a road  
for you to walk on,  
to find me.

Make my days  
a highway for your feet,  
a resting smile  
for your sunshine face.

And Lord,  
walk me forth,  
found,  
ready,  
all the way to the end:  
your house,  
my home.

*by Denisa Nica*

# Among the Stones of His Altar: A Response to Psalm 84

*written and visual art by Millie Murray*

In a noisy tabernacle courtyard, a sparrow settles into its nest... a home built between the stones of an altar.

King, as a sparrow nests among an altar's stony crags, may we earnestly make our humble home in the safe shadow of Your sacrifice. May we press into the strength of Your overcoming death and victorious life, even as the blood of Your mercy washes over us in the daily rhythms of our lives. As we rely on You for our strength, may we learn to dwell in trust beneath the gift of Your life, lain down for us. Amen.



# Christmastide TWO

## EPHESIANS 1:3-14

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

A Valentine  
signed, '*Grace*'  
*by Nick Friend*





# Delighting in Mystery

by Ellen Hope Rupp

I struggle with keeping secrets, because I can be so overwhelmed by the delight and pleasure that I know will come when the secret is revealed. It's too good to not be shared: a proposal, a pregnancy, a new job, a generous gift, or a wise decision. All of these are hard for me to contain, knowing that there will be rejoicing and praise to God upon their revelation to all.

...in accordance  
with the *riches*  
of God's grace  
that he  
*lavished*  
on us.

Paul opens his letter to the Ephesians like a precious secret, or mystery (1:9), has finally reached the time (1:10) in which it can be openly shared with all. Paul shares his one sentence (1:3-14) outpouring of the delight of God to gather all things in heaven and on earth together in Christ (1:10). God has been faithful through his covenant promises, patiently waiting for the fullness of time when Jesus Christ the Son will be born, die on the cross, and resurrect. Paul's enthusiasm builds as he describes the impact of Christ's work for our lives now. Through Christ's blood, we have forgiveness of sins (1:7). Now redemption and grace are lavishly poured out on God's people (1:7), and Jews and Gentiles are adopted into sonship through Christ (1:4). Can you sense Paul's excitement for these new realities? This is such good news because it pleased God to reveal the mystery to us. The Holy Spirit's seal of our inheritance on us now (1:13) gives us freedom to praise God and receive his blessing.

Brothers and sisters, you have much to rejoice about for a glorious mystery has been revealed! The Lord takes great delight in sharing His grace and love with you and toward the "unity of all things in heaven and on earth under Christ" (1:10). Today, Lord, we ask you to bless us with the joy of the revelation of your great mystery and delight. May Your Joy that is in us lead us closer to unity in the places we live and serve today. May we see this unity as part of your unifying all things. Praise be to God! Amen.



# Christmastide TWO

## LUKE 2:41-52

Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

## Luke 2

by Henry Munyaneza



Child,  
why have  
you  
treated  
us like  
this?

Look,  
your  
father  
and I have  
been  
searching  
for you in  
great  
anxiety.



## What Mary Thought

*by Heather Kaufmann*

I knew it when you left us then—  
that the Word had matured in you  
and the temple taken my place  
as mother, teacher, tender home.

My hands—now searching  
now shaking, now empty—

my time—not wasted  
but spent, as a slow-savored gift.

How can I hold the one  
who holds all things?

How can I give  
to the giver of life?

For now  
I hold these moments  
as I once held you, your  
tiny body, its warmth and curl—

they are the strength, they are  
what bear the slow pierce  
of your going.

# Epiphany



With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

## ISAIAH 60:1-9

Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.  
See, darkness covers the earth  
and thick darkness is over the peoples,  
but the Lord rises upon you  
and his glory appears over you.  
Nations will come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.  
“Lift up your eyes and look about you:  
All assemble and come to you;  
your sons come from afar,  
and your daughters are carried on the hip.  
Then you will look and be radiant,  
your heart will throb and swell with joy;  
the wealth on the seas will be brought to you,  
to you the riches of the nations will come.  
Herds of camels will cover your land,  
young camels of Midian and Ephah.  
And all from Sheba will come,  
bearing gold and incense  
and proclaiming the praise of the Lord.  
All Kedar’s flocks will be gathered to you,  
the rams of Nebaioth will serve you;  
they will be accepted as offerings on my altar,  
and I will adorn my glorious temple.  
“Who are these that fly along like clouds,  
like doves to their nests?  
Surely the islands look to me;  
in the lead are the ships of Tarshish,  
bringing your children from afar,  
with their silver and gold,  
to the honor of the Lord your God,  
the Holy One of Israel,  
for he has endowed you with splendor.



O, Make us Arise as you do  
The fierce dawn breaking,  
Resurrected  
From the night  
that never seems to end  
The stiff still dark that wraps us in it's sorrow

Can the Nations find us in that Dark?  
Can they find us, shroud in wounds and despair?

But you, you bear wounds as crowns  
The marks of darkness are lifted up  
As embers of love embraced

Arise and shine  
Make us luminous our broken shards of small hope  
So that we might ignite the aching hearts  
Of longing nations lost  
That we might find ourselves in them  
Arisen and Whole

*by Rev. Brandon Walsh*

## Isaiah 60:1-9

*by Elissa Lincoln*



# PSALM 72

*Deus, iudicium*

- 1 Give the King your judgments, O God, \*  
and your righteousness to the King's son.
- 2 Then shall he judge your people with righteousness \*  
and defend the poor with justice.
- 3 The mountains also shall bring peace, \*  
and the little hills righteousness to the people.
- 4 He shall vindicate the poor among the people, \*  
defend the children of the poor, and punish the wrongdoer.
- 5 They shall fear you as long as the sun and moon endure, \*  
from one generation to another.
- 6 He shall come down like the rain upon the mown grass, \*  
even as showers that water the earth.
- 7 In his time shall the righteous flourish, \*  
even an abundance of peace, so long as the moon endures.
- 8 His dominion shall be also from one sea to the other, \*  
and from the river unto the world's end.
- 9 Those who dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before him; \*  
his enemies shall lick the dust.
- 10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall give presents; \*  
the kings of Arabia and Seba shall bring gifts.
- 11 All kings shall fall down before him; \*  
all nations shall do him service.
- 12 For he shall deliver the poor when he cries, \*  
the needy also, and the one that has no helper.
- 13 He shall be favorable to the lowly and needy, \*  
and shall preserve the lives of the poor.
- 14 He shall deliver them from falsehood and wrong, \*  
and dear shall their blood be in his sight.
- 15 Long may he live! And unto him shall be given the gold  
of Arabia; \*  
prayer shall ever be made unto him, and daily shall he  
be blessed.
- 16 There shall be an abundance of grain on the earth, thick  
upon the hilltops; \*  
its fruit shall flourish like Lebanon, its grain like the grass  
upon the earth.
- 17 His Name shall endure for ever; his Name shall remain  
as long as the sun. \*  
All the nations shall be blessed through him and  
shall call him blessed.
- 18 Blessed be the LORD God, even the God of Israel, \*  
who alone does wondrous things;
- 19 And blessed be the Name of his majesty for ever; \*  
and all the earth shall be filled with his majesty.  
Amen, Amen.

Father,  
like water  
keeps coming back  
to sand,  
so your goodness  
sweeps over bones  
laid bare,  
who weep  
over their lost flesh.  
You mark a trail  
of salt  
to heal and clear,  
to grow tissue  
back to life.  
Give strength,  
my Father,  
Let the sting,  
your goodness  
do its painful work,  
cure.  
Then, sweep me  
off my feet  
and take me on a  
holiday at sea.

*by Denisa Nica*

# Epiphany

## EPHESIANS 3:13

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

# Epiphany

## Mystery

*by Rev. Brandon Walsh*

It was there  
In the hollow the world's monotonous,  
Grinding progression  
The woven truth invisible  
Suspended in the unmarked seasons turning  
Like gravity's unchanging fasten on the  
universe

In all things it was pregnant and yearning  
As if barely restrained in expectation  
Unseen  
Unknown  
Present to a future yet blooming

A Mystery  
Until a small crack in the firmament of our  
blindness opens  
And seeing it, we can't unsee.  
And hearing it, we can't unhear.  
That one in whom all things live and move  
and have our being.  
The mystery that sets alight the foundations  
of our world  
If only we have eyes to see, ears to hear

A mystery revealed  
To us  
In us  
Through us





## Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.” Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

# *The Mysteries*

by Matthew David Zelic

Ring around the  
rosary, a pocket  
full of tissues, five  
days into this head  
& chest cold &  
three beads shy of  
finishing this third  
decade of scriptural  
meditations when  
they appear.

Far-seers from  
the East with  
God-fearing faces  
& intellects receptive  
to signs, symbols, stars  
rising & falling.

& it is they who  
are falling now, knees  
earthward, toes & tunics  
sinking into mud, silk  
sack spilling starlight,

but of frankincense  
& myrrh—  
not a scent.

Not even a whiff  
of rose incense  
from these red  
Jerusalem beads,  
my tether to time

past present pending.

I open my mouth  
& move breaths  
in & out, relishing brief  
radio silence before  
air sacs crackle  
with electrostatic  
discharge & I feel  
foreign fingers  
raking my lungs  
for petitions  
too sticky  
to dislodge.

So I entrust  
these secrets  
to my hands.

Ring.  
Around.  
The rosary.

Thumb & pointer  
rotating prayer  
rope, encircling love's  
ever-widening  
wound.

& I am imagining  
the God-Child  
with whooping cough  
& lung inflammation  
& sinus infection

& a mother's sighs  
& her salutary hands  
& tears

for a crown  
no longer  
newborn-scented.

Yet even this.

Another treasure  
for the hole in  
the God-Mother-Mary's  
chest, where she will  
safeguard all these  
mysteries—

the joyful  
& the sorrowful  
alike.

# Matthew 2:1-12

by Henry Munyaneza





Great Bay Anglican Church  
*Dover, NH*