



COME EMMANUEL  
RENEW OUR HEARTS.

ADVENT 2017



THE KITTAMAQUNDI COMMUNITY CHURCH

# *Introduction*

Advent is the season that prepares our hearts, minds, and spirit for the awakening of the Christ child within; the one who is innocent, hopeful, loving, and joyful. To wish this time of preparation away may be at the root of our struggle to fully embrace the season. We encourage you to take time for quiet daily meditation and journaling in Advent as a way of drawing ever nearer to and resting in God's presence during this time of year. We hope this booklet provides a tool for your daily reflections.

Take a few moments to consider what your hopes and intentions are for this Advent Season.

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# *December 3 Hope*

*Paul writes:*

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God always for you, because of God’s grace that was given to you in Christ Jesus. That is, you were made rich through him in everything: in all your communication and every kind of knowledge, in the same way that the testimony about Christ was confirmed with you.

The result is that you aren’t missing any spiritual gift while you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also confirm your testimony about Christ until the end so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful, and you were called by him to partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” - 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

What word or phrase stands out to you in this Scripture?  
What is the text asking you to do, to be or to change?

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## *December 4 Luke 1:26-38*

THE WHISPER OF GOD'S VOICE by Charles Powell, 1998

As I enter advent this year I want to be more mindful of waiting and listening for God's voice. We know that Mary heard God's voice and then she responded in a way I hope I could learn to do.

Not long ago I heard a story about a young man and an older preacher. The young man had lost his job and didn't know which way to turn so he went to see the old preacher. He paced about the preacher's study and ranted about the problem. Finally he clenched his fists and shouted: "I've begged God to say something to help me. Tell me, Preacher, why doesn't God answer? The old preacher, who sat across the room, spoke something in reply – something so hushed it was indistinguishable. The young man stepped across the room:

"What did you say?" he asked. The preacher repeated himself, but again in a tone as soft as a whisper. So the young man moved closer until he was leaning on the preacher's chair. "Sorry", he said. "I still didn't hear you". With their heads bent together, the old preacher spoke once more. "God sometimes whispers," he said, "so that we will move closer to hear God".

We have experienced the closeness to God that results from drawing near and really listening. So, as I move through this advent season, I want to learn patience in waiting and to hear and respond to God's whispers.

PRAYER: God, we ask that you help us to wait for that still small voice speaking to us and that we respond to what you say to us as Mary did so long ago.

AMEN

*December 5*

**PROPHETS OF A FUTURE NOT OUR OWN**

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

Amen. - Bishop Ken Untener, Saginaw, MI

## *December 6 Luke 1:78-80*

HOPE by Carol Lobell

Our God is merciful and tender. God's sunshine will break in upon us, shining on those in darkness and shining on those sitting in the shadow of death. God will then guide our steps into the place of peace.

In C.S. Lewis' book "Surprised by Joy", he recounts his bachelor days that continued way into middle age when he was surprised by the events of falling in love with a woman named Joy. Through this autobiographical book, he illustrates how we all have experienced moving from despair to joy.

My own "surprised by joy" moment came when I was in the darkest place and going through a divorce. My husband was leaving me and our three young children to find his own happiness with a new wife and a new life. I was at the lowest point in my life when I met John Lobell. My relationship with John evolved into a very loving and satisfying marriage, better than I had ever known. Looking back on my life I know that God has guided me through many dark times and I know that God will love and guide me through the tough times ahead. When the angel visited Mary before Jesus was born, the angel said: "Don't be afraid, Mary. The Holy Spirit will come on you and God's power with rest upon you."

If we stop and listen, we can hear God's voice calling us into a new way of living, in hope and trust.

During this Advent, I am approaching my 80th birthday. As I slow down to "be still and know God", I want to deepen my faith journey. I don't feel old right now but I do have fears of what the unknown future will hold. I know that God is walking this journey with me and will guide me home.

I'll be singing this song in my heart this Advent season:

"Lead me, guide me, along the way,

For if You lead me, I cannot stray.

Lord let me walk each day with You.

Lead me, O Lord, lead me".

*December 7*

**HOPE AND TRUST by John Lobell, 1998**

My concept of hope is changing from hoping for something to happen in the future, to living with a more subtle trust in God's process. I now have the understanding that "Life is unfolding exactly as it should". I am enjoying life as I never have before, even in childhood. In spite of a body which is feeling the assaults of arthritis and a loss of previously abundant energy, this is the best part of my life. My eyes are seeing more beauty everywhere in nature and in my increasing ability to see God in the eyes of friends and strangers. Of course there is pain throughout all this beauty (within and without me) but that does not take away the beauty.

Most important is the flowering of my spiritual life. I believe it is my daily habit of sitting in quiet meditation for half an hour which has enabled me to get a new vision of what life is truly about. I am more able to let go of my ego's demands and accept life as it shows up, day by day. I'm more able to live in the present instead of in the future or the past.

This leads me to the Advent theme of trust. I am more able to stay in my present moment, where everything is tolerable, because everything continues to change. This trust is not the conclusion to a reasoned argument but a result of my current enjoyment of life; of loving more people more deeply, including myself; of not demanding that life/reality be different from what it is. I'm willing to simply accept life as a gift from God to be shared and enjoyed. Even pain, grief and death can be redeemed when they are shared in love.

I thank God for this gift of Trust. I pray we will all accept this gift, so openly offered by God – maybe this Christmas.



## *December 8*

### **DRAWING NEARER TO GOD by Marsha Broaddus**

On September 10th, I decided to have a one on one with God. It was Sunday, but I had been having trouble going to church. A reminder that Heather was gone. I had had a busy summer and had opted to be present with the people I was with rather than having my usual quiet time in the mornings.

My spirit was as parched as my shriveled plants when I returned from the beach after three weeks. That, coupled with the fact that I was scheduled to work the 3-11 shift at Bon Secours, was the deciding factor.

I pulled out my dusty Daily Guideposts - the first step in my morning ritual. "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 2:1. God wasn't angry that I had been neglecting our time together. God was there as I opened the book. Arms spread wide - inviting me into that grace. I savored the image of resting in God's loving arms.

Next I opened my Bible to Luke 10: 38-42 as suggested by the Upper Room. The words that jumped out at me were "distracted by many things". How true that was. The thought for the day was, "I will make time for God today." I smiled as I read the prayer offered by Janice LeMaster. "Dear Lord ... help me make time for you today and every day as I focus on a close walk with you. Amen". As so often happens, I sense that God knows where I am emotionally and knows exactly what I need.

This is a busy, hectic time of year, but I invite you to join me as I focus on a "closer walk with God."

## *December 9*

### DO YOU WANT TO BE WELL?

By John Farrell, Patapsco Friends Meeting

“In Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate in the north city wall is a pool with the Aramaic name Bethesda... A certain man was there who had been sick for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, knowing that he had already been there a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” - John 5:2-6

When I first encountered this passage as a child in Sunday school I simply accepted the incredible story on faith and understood it literally as another example of Jesus’ power to heal.

Years later, when I encountered this story again as an adult Seeker of the Truth I still was able to accept the story literally as a mysterious miracle, but now I began to consider it in a much broader, more encompassing, metaphorical light. Jesus healed a physically challenged person so what could I learn from this story as I was physically able (more or less!)? Was there something important here for me to consider?

Today, I understand, ‘Do you want to be well?’ to be Jesus’ quintessential query because it is central to virtually every thought or action I have every day. If I’m in a strained or broken relationship with someone, can I consider myself well if I’m unwilling to work on resolving the issue? Am I in ‘good health’ if I’m adamantly right about a situation and am no longer willing to listen to another’s point of view? Is insistence on ‘being right’ really a sign of health? What about my relationship to the larger community? Do I work consciously and mindfully to address injustices I see? As George Orwell observed, ‘to be well-adjusted to a profoundly sick society is not a sign of health’.

For me, health is virtually synonymous with personal authenticity and has little to do with physical wellbeing. Remember ‘but this above all, to thine own self be true’? Follow your own path with honesty and integrity and you will be on the path to happiness and right relationship with God and Creation.

## *December 10 Love Isaiah 40:1-5*

“Comfort, comfort my people!

says your God.

Speak compassionately to Jerusalem,

and proclaim to her that her compulsory service has ended,

that her penalty has been paid,

that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins!

A voice is crying out:

“Clear the LORD’s way in the desert!

Make a level highway in the wilderness for our God!

Every valley will be raised up,

and every mountain and hill will be flattened.

Uneven ground will become level,

and rough terrain a valley plain.

The LORD’s glory will appear,

and all humanity will see it together;

the LORD’s mouth has commanded it.”

What word or phrase stands out to you in this Scripture? What is the text asking you to do, to be or to change?

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## *December 11*

LOVE by Alice Howard, 1998

“The Lord says: “Do not cling to the things of the past nor dwell on what happened long ago. Watch for the new thing I am going to do. It has happened already- you can see it now! I will make a road through the wilderness and give you streams of living water there.” - Isaiah 43:18-19

Dear God, here during Advent I feel all the pushes and pulls of the Christmas season. I dread the demands of getting and giving, of fearing and hoping, of forgetting and remembering, wanting to run away and longing to come Home. I wish for an escape from the jingles and tinsels that are everywhere. I long for more Bach and Handel.

“Watch for a new thing – I will make a road through the wilderness” The wilderness in me where homeless refugees barely survive.

Streams of fresh water would be so welcome, Lord, where there is only flood tides and pollution. I thirst, dear God. My parched heart faints for your Living water.

Love comes in the form of a baby at Christmas. The miracle happens again, announced by a cry and by angels. Blood and pain bring joy and hope.

Immanuel – God is here, now! We should shout out “Love, Joy, Hope”.

Dear God, come, be born in me today. Help me to cradle you and nurture your promised presence, that we may be One, walking with you on your road through my wilderness and by your streams of Living Water.

## *December 12*

GOD IS LOVE by Amy Sens

In the beginning was the Word  
and the Word was with God  
and the Word was God.

The Word was with God in the beginning.

- John 1:1-2

Like many Christians, I have my issues with the idea of the Trinity. For one thing, the word Trinity isn't even in the Bible. It seems like something taped together after the fact, unlike the smooth, shiny stone of a single, monolithic God, uniform in form and substance, Creator, Friend and Indwelling Spirit all at once, and totally self-sufficient.

But what if the Trinity does tell us something beautiful and needed about God? What if God is not a person, or even three people in a crowded roommate situation, but what if instead God is the flow, the dance of love between them? We say, "God is love," but isn't love an action? It may be that God is the glue, just as much as or more than the personalities. Will you join the dance?

Prayer: Loving God, give us the courage to enter your song. Amen.

# *December 13*

SOMETHING'S COMING by Roger Blair

Something's coming—can you hear it?

It's Xmas, right?

(The calendar says so.)

No, it isn't Xmas.

Xmas has been here since before Halloween.

All the holiday displays,

The boughs of holly—they're already dusty.

they've become part of the furniture—

We hardly notice them anymore.

No, it isn't Xmas.

Something's coming—can you feel it?

It's Santa—it has to be.

No, Santa's been here for weeks

Making himself comfortable in all the stores.

All the ads blaring in our eyes and ears.

Santa's been around a while--

Long enough that we take his presence for granted

And don't ask questions—just spend.

Something's coming—can you see it?

Well, how about peace?

The angels sing, "Peace on earth,

Good will to all!”

Isn't that what we've been waiting for?

Keep on waiting—it's not here yet—

All the violence, by ones, by twos,

By twenties, by two hundreds.

All the fulminating of politicians,

Partisans, and all those

Who should know better

But don't act like it.

Something's coming—what is it?

Not Xmas, not Santa,

Not even a hint of peace.

What, then?

Love—cradled in a manger,

Wrapped tightly in warm cloths,

In the place least expected,

At a time foretold.

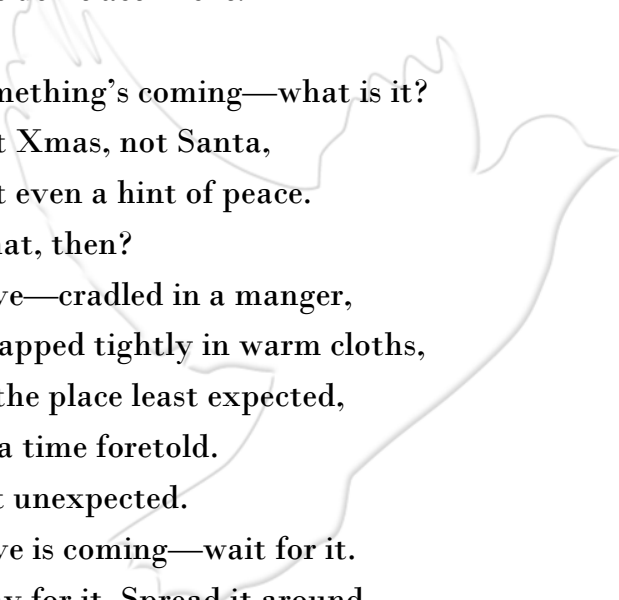
Yet unexpected.

Love is coming—wait for it.

Pray for it. Spread it around.

Give thanks for it.

Love is coming!



*December 14*

A WALK IN THE DARK by Sharon Setzer

“And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:20

After having attended an environmental meeting at the State Senate Office Bldg., I walked with a friend in the dark, fall evening towards my car parked in an Annapolis parking garage. My friend left me to go to her car, so I walked on alone. I passed a familiar park and saw a woman sitting on a park bench. She was clearly a person of modest means, dressed warmly but worn clothes. She had a hood over her head and I didn't realize she was a woman until I came up close. As I was passing her, I said “Hello.” She responded with a kind sounding voice, “Hi.” She seemed surprised that I spoke to her.

When I asked her how she was, she again responded positively. I sat down and we began talking easily about the weather and soon about ourselves. What I had been so timid and fearful of in the dark streets of Annapolis became a relaxed, warm exchange on that cold night. She said no one usually spoke to her, much less sat down to talk to her. She felt invisible to the indifferent people that walked by. I asked her if she needed anything and she said not much. I said I didn't have much money, but wished she would allow me to give her what I had in my wallet, only \$10 dollars. She was so grateful and thanked me profusely. We said goodbye after exchanging names and pleasantries. While I gave her money, I realized she gave me so much more. She gave me herself, thoughts, and blessed me. That was a God moment!



*December 15*

WHAT BETTER GIFT? by Al German

This summer, I came face to face with my mortality. As a life-long bachelor with few remaining family ties, I was pretty rattled when the doctor informed me that I had an aggressive form of prostate cancer. I immediately called a friend from KC. We met for lunch and came up with an action plan. I discovered that I did not have to face this situation alone.

A few weeks ago I finished the radiation treatments surrounded by the medical team urging me to ring a termination bell. They cheered me and wished me well as they sent me on my way. One of the great things that I learned during this long process, was that I had a lot of people that cared about me. I was surprised at all the support and concern expressed, but most important of all, by how loved I felt.

I have been hanging around KC for a long time. God is still a mystery to me, but I can say, that being associated with this fellowship of people has been one of the greatest experiences of my life. I have come to know that I am not alone. What better gift is there?

## *December 16*

### **WATCHING, WAITING by Marie Moore, 1998**

This past spring the Old Testament class, using Bruce Birch's book, *What Does the Lord Require of Thee?* focused on the Promise of God to every human, inviting them to change course and be "taught the ways of God and to walk in God's path." Three weeks after the class ended, I had a lumpectomy and subsequent diagnosis of breast cancer with 33 radiation treatments. This got my attention! In order to participate in my healing, I had to follow obediently some very specific instructions and to acknowledge fully the toll the radiation was having on my physical and emotional strength. Like the manna given daily to the Israelites by the grace of God, each day I was allotted a small quantity of energy. When it was gone, it was kaput! NO reserves! This all-encompassing fatigue was very humbling for me and catapulted me into a whole new life style of watching and waiting...for health to return...for lessons to be learned.

I could no longer count on my natural vitality to keep on producing and giving. Instead, I became the recipient of an abundance of loving kindness as God's love became manifest so tangibly through friends and family. Almost overnight life became incredibly simpler. Some days it was reduced to "Happiness is a good nap and a tall glass of water."

The bottom line is that this whole experience has been so profound on my life that at times I actually don't regret having had to face a life-threatening illness. I know as I've never known before that I am beloved, and each of us is beloved! That God's love fills and permeates and surrounds us every day of our lives and that love will never let us go.

## *December 17 Joy*

Paul writes:

“Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks in every situation because this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Don’t suppress the Spirit. Don’t brush off Spirit-inspired messages, but examine everything carefully and hang on to what is good. Avoid every kind of evil.

Now, may the God of peace himself cause you to be completely dedicated to him; and may your spirit, soul, and body be kept intact and blameless at our Lord Jesus Christ’s coming. The one who is calling you is faithful and will do this.” - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17

What word or phrase stands out to you in this Scripture? What is the text asking you to do, to be or to change?

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## *December 18*

### TASTE AND SEE by Marsha Broaddus

This morning during my quiet time, I was drawn back to Oct 15, 2006. I was on a retreat with Jerry Goethe and others from KC at Rolling Ridge. We had been exploring all of our senses as we attempted to "draw nigh to God".

I was stretched out on the top bunk in the left front bedroom doing my quiet time. The scripture I read was Psalm 34:8. "O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in the Lord." I had written in the margin of my Bible, "We will explore our sense of taste today." As I wrote those words, I could smell the Cinnamon Rolls baking in the oven downstairs. I remember feeling so connected to God - tears splashed onto the page in front of me.

Today the Upper Room led me back to Psalm 34:8. The NIV says it this way. "Taste and see the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in the Lord". Bingo!!!! Blessed is exactly how I feel as I sit propped up in my bed, sipping a cup of spiced Chai tea, gazing out the window at the sun bathed leaved trees, and knowing that my quiet times have helped me to experience and know God more deeply.

I invite you to take a few minutes to savor how blessed you are and to let the creative energy that permeates you to flow out into the world this day.

## *December 19*

### THE GIFT OF PEACE by Normale Doyle

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward all. (Luke 2:13-14)*

How do I live into this “peace on earth” message in my little corner of God’s world?

I believe the gift of peace promised by the Christ child invites me to live into Christ’s peace when I encounter a difficult person and upsetness or hurt or judgementalness harden my heart.

Difficult people are a part of the complex tapestry of the “Great Oneness” of God. Difficult people are as much a manifestation of God’s love as those people who are easy and fun to be around. I cannot be fully “at one” with the Christ child when I am separated from any one of these manifestations of God’s love. When I separate myself from a difficult person I separate myself from that part of God’s love that is within them. Feeling peace while around a difficult person is a spiritual issue.

So I practice the “difficult person” spiritual discipline. When my heart begins to harden and I want to avoid the person, instead I give thanks for the opportunity to experience God’s love and I focus on the person with this prayer:

“I see the light of God within you, come out and give me your blessing.”

Even if I do not succeed in seeing their “God-light”, the process of being open to the God-light of a difficult person brings me into greater relationship with the “peace on earth” promise of the Christ child.

## *December 20*

PEACE THROUGH INCARNATION by Amy Sens

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of a messenger who proclaims peace, who brings good news, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God rules!’” - Isaiah 52:7

If you're wondering whether I saw Wonder Woman in the theater this summer, the answer is: of course I did. And now I'm going to spoil it for anybody who hasn't seen it yet...

At the climactic ending of the movie, Wonder Woman fights the god of war, Ares, who has been posing as a man. And somehow with her super powers, she makes a big explosion that kills him. The problem with this outcome, I think to myself as I sit in my stadium seating, overthinking these things, that a big fight and a big explosion only add to the powers of the gods of war. Peace through strength is an illusion.

Thank God for Jesus, born into this world in a radical act of peace—identifying with us so deeply as to become one of us. This, after all, is the true messenger of peace—one who comes to listen, to re-humanize, to bring life and re-connection. Jesus leads us into peace in his radical identification with the other—with us—in his incarnation.

Prayer: Teach us your ways, O Prince of Peace. Amen.

## *December 21*

### STAYING AWAKE by Theresa Gale

Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves his home and puts his workers in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake .... or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly." Mark 13:35

Years before I learned about the Enneagram, I was on automatic as a young mother of 3 and working full time. I rose each day, brushed my teeth, walked the dog, and the day was a blur from there. I look back at those days and have little memory of my two youngest who were 13 months apart and can't recall any feelings; rather, I would describe myself as numb -- sleep-walking through my days and my life.

In 1996 I was introduced to the Enneagram which literally woke me up. I learned that my way of being in the world, which I adopted very early in life, was to be self-forgetting so as to keep things peaceful and harmonious and free of conflict. Waking up entailed discovering my own needs and wants and speaking them. Needless to say, not everyone in my world liked that ... "Where had the old sweet, compliant Theresa gone?" many wondered.

One thing I learned is that waking up never becomes habit, rather, it is something we have to work on every single day, even moment, of our life. I can so easily slip back into self-forgetting, yet now I notice sooner when I go back to sleep, and can be that doorkeeper for myself.

What does your "asleep" look like? What wakes you up? How do you stay awake?

## *December 22*

AN OPENING DOOR by Amy Sens

“The angel said, ‘Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord.’” - Luke 2:10-11

My deepest experiences of joy have come when I have felt stuck or trapped, held in in some way, and then in a moment a door opens, making way for a whole new set of possibilities. Joy feels like freedom opening up to a wide-open sky, an invitation into something new. How much joy, then, do we find when a baby is born and the door opens on a whole new life!

The people of Judah have felt hemmed in and held down by the empires that come and go through their land. And then the angels open up the sky itself to some unsuspecting shepherds. An new door is opening!

What they don’t know is that this new baby, this new life, will open the door into joy for the whole world.

Prayer: Joy to the World! For Christ has come!



## *December 23*

"O God who invites:

when we pause, and listen,  
our ears can take in holy sounds.

Holy voices.

There are many in our midst  
with their unique telling of your peace,  
of your love,  
of your holy imagination,  
stirring,  
even now.

Challenge us to seek you many voices,  
to draw closer to our neighbor,  
and to listen deeply.

Remind us of the power of words  
not as weapons,  
but as openings to you.

Whisper to us this day, God,  
that we may know deeply that you are indeed  
still speaking.

You have much to say  
that your children -- all of us -- need to hear.

Let it be so.

Amen.

Excerpt for *Open Our Eyes: Daily Prayers in Advent*  
by Ann Gerondelis

## *December 24*

### THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM by Normale Doyle

*...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.*

Matthew 2:9

For the last few months there was a wall around my spirit. I could not see the “star ahead of me.” My empty shell showed up at the appropriate activities but the “real me” was not present.

For several weeks, I wrote thank you notes. As I wrote, gratitude flowed in and through and around me. Gratitude is a miraculous healer. It is impossible to be in a pool of gratitude and remain an empty shell. I am starting to rise up out of the ashes. Gratitude cracked the spirit-wall I built. The cracks allow a two-way flow... they allowed for God’s “presence” to flow in and they allow my “being” to flow out into the world. I am starting to move from being a spectator in “the Great Oneness” to being a “presence” again. This last week I have been intensely in touch with the mystery of God working in my life and God’s Universe.

God is like a “star of Bethlehem” diamond with infinite facets. Each of us is a facet of that diamond reflecting God’s Being to those whose lives we touch. We are each like the star of Bethlehem leading ourselves and others to the Christ child. Even when I feel like an “empty shell” I am one of the facets of the Star of Bethlehem “God diamond.”

## *December 25—Christmas*

“Come, O come, Emmanuel,  
open our hearts, renew us.  
Come, O come, Emmanuel,  
bring us love and make us whole once more.”

### AN INVITATION

God came to us because he wanted to join us on the road, to listen to our story, and to help us realize that we are not walking in circles but moving towards the house of peace and joy. This is the great mystery of Christmas that continues to give us comfort and consolation: we are not alone on our journey.

The God of love who gave us life sent us his only Son to be with us all the time and in all places, so that we never have to feel lost in our struggles but always can trust that he walks with us.

Christmas is the renewed invitation not to be afraid and let him--whose love is greater than our own hearts and minds can comprehend--be our companion.

Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Gracias! A Latin American Journal*

\*\*\*WARNING \*\*\* WARNING \*\*\*

## ADVENT VIRUS ALERT

Be on alert for symptoms of inner **Hope, Peace, Joy and Love**. The hearts of a great many have already been exposed to this virus and it is possible that people everywhere could come down with it in epidemic proportions. This could pose a serious threat to what has, up to now, been a fairly stable condition of conflict in the world.

Some signs and symptoms of The Advent Virus:

- A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experiences.
- An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.
- A loss of interest in judging other people.
- A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others.
- A loss of interest in conflict.
- A loss of ability to worry. (This is a very serious symptom.)
- Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation.
- Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature.
- Frequent attacks of smiling.
- An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen.



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