



**CALVARY ADVENT  
DEVOTIONALS  
2022**



## **FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT:**

# **SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2022**

### **SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 2:1–5**

In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it.

Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

### **REFLECTION BY DON BEAR**

In this passage, Isaiah tells of a future world ("in the days to come") where God's kingdom is established on "the highest mountain". This seems to me a very literal interpretation of 'the highest court in the land'. Higher is better, right?

From this highest court, every nation will come to settle their disputes.

A world court where all people are so confident in the fairness of the decisions, that no other court is needed!

Can you even imagine something like that? I have to admit, when considering the absolute authority of one individual or even one court to arbitrate for all the world's conflicts – well, I find that somewhat terrifying. I mean, our track record as humans with any kind of absolute authority is not very good. Surely anyone with that kind of power would misuse it.

But this is exactly the kind of kingdom that Isaiah says is coming - any day now..

Imagine a society where all disputes were decided so fairly, that both sides agreed with the decision. What would that be like? No armies. No police. No courts. No lawyers. No prisons. No Judge Judy.

You get to a world like that and then one day you look around and say, “What are we going to do with all of these swords?” Or, more relevant to today’s common arsenal, “What do we do with these guns now?” AR-15 floor lamps? I’m just spit-balling here.

Isaiah gives us the answer: “They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.” Of course! With no more death by war or domestic violence, there will be a lot more mouths to feed. Maybe it’s the old Chef in me, but I love that the solution to our ‘excess weapons problem’ is to grow more food. Just imagine it.

“O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!”

## **AUTHOR BIO**

Don Bear is the Elder for New Members on Calvary’s Session. He likes to cook, sing (as a member of Calvary’s choir), and play golf (which he is bad at and getting worse). He is happily married to the lovely and talented Kathy Bear.





# MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: PSALM 124

If it had not been the Lord who was on our side —let Israel now say— if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when our enemies attacked us, then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their anger was kindled against us; then the flood would have swept us away, the torrent would have gone over us; then over us would have gone the raging waters. Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth. We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.





## **SCRIPTURE REFLECTION BY TOSCA LEE**

“I don’t want you to think like me, I just want you to think.” - Rev. Dr. Howard – John Wesley, Pastor of Alfred Street Baptist Church; Alexandria, VA.

I can’t think or imagine being alive today If it had not been for the Lord on my side. Verses one and two of this scripture are a constant reminder of the many trials & tribulations God has brought me through.

I am, as I’m sure you are also, so thankful & grateful for our God being on my side.

Verse three reminds me of the times I have been attacked in all kinds of ways which still happens today. God was on my side. The Lord knew I was unable to handle the attack with grace, mercy, and love. (The real me would have shown up!).

How do I know the Lord is on my side? I am given strength to praise God’s name no matter what I’m going through! With my Amen, Hallelujah, and “Praise the Lord!” I know that I am free! What about you? Do you feel free, my sister and brother, so that you too can praise the Lord no matter what?

Question: Where would you be today If the Lord wasn’t on your side?

Reflect and think about that today. I do every day.

## **AUTHOR BIO**

Hey! I’m Tosca Lee: noise maker, deacon, prayer warrior for the Lord. I love to read, travel, walk, visit museums, attend church, and so many other things. But, the best thing I do every day, is live life for Christ!



# TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 9:8-17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

## REFLECTION BY JANE MANNING HYATT

In this passage, God establishes a covenant with "every living creature" to not destroy our planet. Reading it, I immediately thought about the flooding, fires, droughts, and all the devastating climate news we hear about every day. It also made me ask, "What is our agreement in return?" Seems logical that we have a responsibility to protect the planet, too. The "Think Globally, Act Locally" charge reminded me of my own journey to being a more responsible steward of our precious Earth.

I drew a line at composting. Recycling? Absolutely! Limiting landfill? Most definitely! Composting? Disgusting! And I must mention, a little inconvenient.



However, my best friend Kathy Hutton refused to give up on my ability to be a better human. Kathy is on a personal crusade to save the planet through proper waste management. She doesn't have any children of her own, but she feels a duty, an unwavering commitment to save us and future generations from the human-induced damage that facilitates these catastrophic weather events we've been experiencing, like flooding. Through her witness and encouragement, she convinced me to incorporate composting into my daily routine.

First, she bought me a green bucket and a year's supply of compost bags as a gentle nudge of encouragement. And yet, I resisted the idea of having food scraps pile up in a plastic bin in my kitchen - the bugs, the smell... the thought of it repulsed me. We had many illuminating conversations about how compost is used on local farms to survive drought and reduce the need for chemical fertilizers, as well as reducing waste in our landfills. When Kathy came over to visit, she would sort my trash so that everything made it to the correct bin. It was embarrassing - I began to feel guilty about my cavalier attitude towards doing this small act for the planet.

During the first few months of Covid, I gradually started using the green bin because, why not? I had the time, and frankly, it wasn't very hard to take out the compost when I took out the recycling. Now, I'm proud to be a reformed and vigilant composter, doing my part in the waste management arena. I'm grateful to Kathy for her passion and love of this planet and see God using her to help us honor His creations.

What do you do, and what can you start doing, in your daily life that supports God's covenant?

## **AUTHOR BIO**

Jane Manning Hyatt is currently the Elder for Fellowship at Calvary. She has been a member of the Calvary community for 16 years and loves being involved in church activities. Jane Manning works for Lifetouch School Photography, where she manages Northern California. She loves to travel, host parties, and read books and articles by her favorite author, Fran Johns.



# **WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2022**

## **SCRIPTURE: MATT. 24:30–35**

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, 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 forth 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 tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

## **REFLECTION BY CHARLOTTE GAUCK**

In this passage, it talks about the powerful, peaceful, and amazing God. I think it really highlights how God is a glorious being that connects heaven and earth.

Sometimes in my life, it feels like heaven is really far away, but this passage reminds me that God is always with me, and closer than we think.

How are God and heaven close to you today?

## **AUTHOR BIO**

Charlotte Gauck is in 7th grade, and her favorite food is sushi. She enjoys playing sports and hanging out with her friends. She is currently in the confirmation class that meets at 9am at Calvary.







# THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 4:2–6

On that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel. Whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, once the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgement and by a spirit of burning. Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over its places of assembly a cloud by day and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night. Indeed, over all the glory there will be a canopy. It will serve as a pavilion, a shade by day from the heat, and a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.

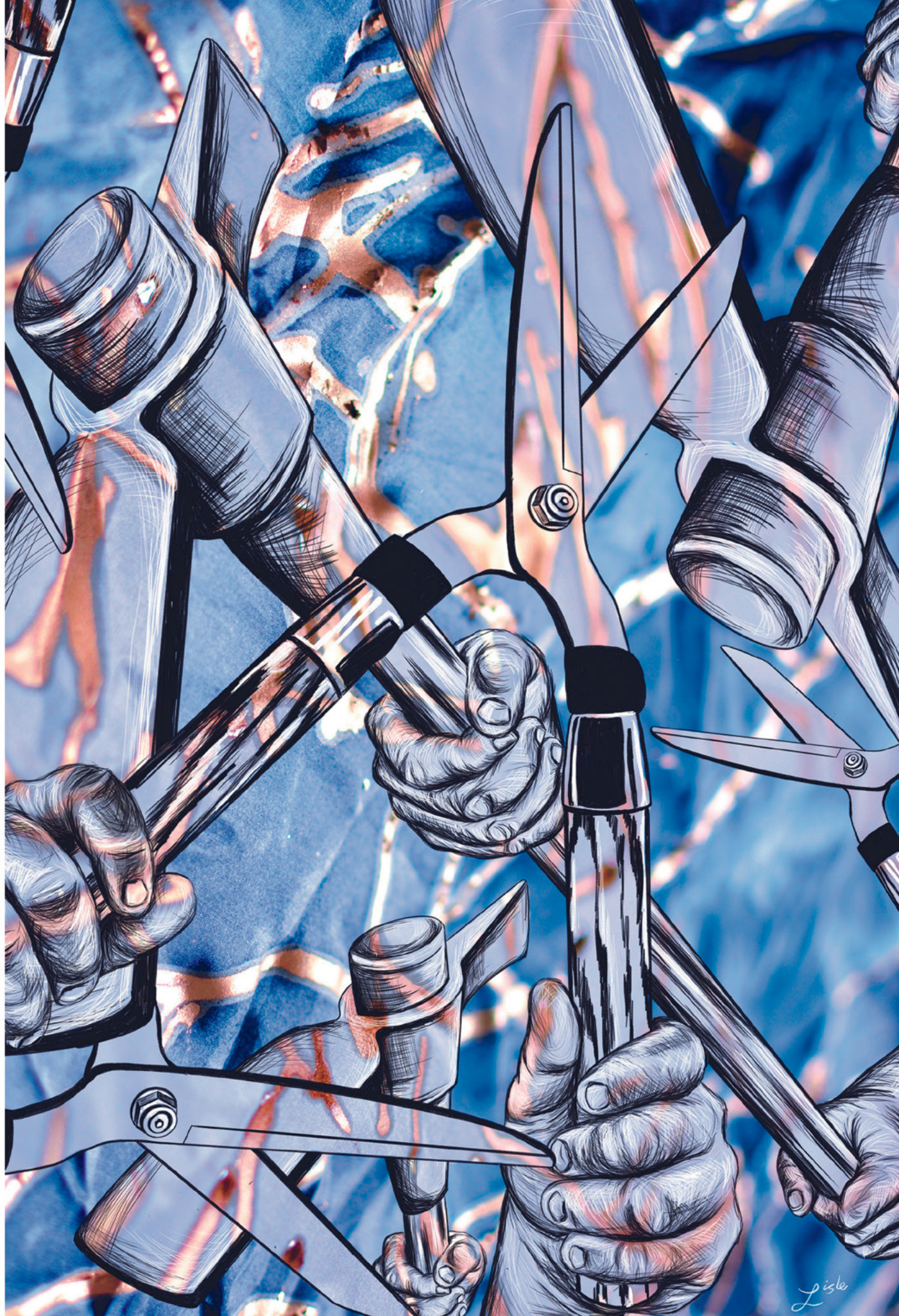
## REFLECTION BY WILL BONDURANT

As I write this — as we see the wrath of climate change, impacts of economic uncertainty, an upcoming election, and fractures in the democratic foundation of our country — it is easy and I would say appropriate to feel that our city, nation, and world are not what they should be. Today's passage from Isaiah reminds us of the role God can play in our renewal. Some 27 centuries ago, when our sisters were baking under the sun, God provided shade to renew Jerusalem. When our brothers were shivering in the winter cold, God provided shelter and refuge from the storm. Today, in our dark, wintry SF as we anticipate the coming of Christ, I am remembering that our God is a builder of pavilions and shelters that protect & renew us. Let us be renewed as were the residents of Jerusalem so many years ago, and use that renewal to work toward the betterment of our 21st century world.

## AUTHOR BIO

Will Bondurant is a member of the Calvary Young Adults, organizer of Calvary running events, and a super-fan of Calvary's Choir. He lives in San Francisco and loves to explore and enjoy our 'Cool Grey City of Love,' with a special affection for its parks and outdoor spaces.







# FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 30:19–21

Truly, O people in Zion, inhabitants of Jerusalem, you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you. Though the Lord may give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself any more, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’

## REFLECTION BY SUSAN HEMPSTEAD

This scripture passage from Isaiah reminds me that though we may encounter difficulties and adversity at times in life, God hears our cries and responds. We are not guaranteed that bad things won’t happen, but we can be comforted knowing that we do not face them alone. God is always there to support and guide us and to give us the strength we need to get through them.

I don’t know who said this, but I like to think it is true: “God comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, He brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us.”

## AUTHOR BIO

Susan Hempstead is a current Elder and long-time member of Calvary. Her passions are travel (just spin the globe, point and she will be there!) and ice cream, not necessarily in that order!





Levy



# **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2022**

## **SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 40:1–5**

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

## **REFLECTION BY RANDY SCHROEDER**

Our scripture for today is from the book of Isaiah, which contains some of the most incredible prophecies of any book. It contains foreknowledge, in incredible details about the Messiah, and the future reign of the Jesus Christ. The purpose of the book of Isaiah was to call the God's nation, the nation of Judah, back to faithfulness and to declare the coming Messiah "Immanuel", meaning "God with us."

The passage begins with comforting my people and assures that their sins have been pardoned. Verse 3 states a voice that is calling out from the wilderness to make way for the Lord. It goes on to say the road out of the wilderness has been made easy by the uneven ground be made level and that the glory of the Lord will be revealed to all people.



Living in the bay area we love to go on hikes with our dog Luke that sometimes includes hills, valleys and winding paths. However, Luke is not in favor of these outings. He would rather be at home where he feels safe. Instead of calmly walking, Luke chooses to pull on his leash walking as fast as he can. He is exhausted by the time we are just half way through our hike. I know that sometimes I am much like Luke. I like to choose what I believe is safe and not step out in faith. I drive to accomplish the things I need to get done and soon I find myself hopelessly exhausted. Faith certainly starts with my letting go and trusting God. This time of year, reminds me, that God's glory is available to all. He has made path straight by the birth of his Son. Today as you go about your day, trust in the glory of God, that Immanuel is truly "God with Us."

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## **AUTHOR BIO**

Randy Schroeder, Elder of Music and Worship and Calvary member since 2008. When not at church he enjoys hiking, listening to music and enjoying all that the bay area has to offer especially great food and entertainment.





## **SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2022**

### **SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 3:1–10**

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’ This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, ‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”’

Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our ancestor”; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’





## **REFLECTION BY KEI FUJIMURA**

“Bob’s your uncle.”

Ed said this to me (I can’t remember why), but I responded, ‘Bob is my Dad, not my Uncle!’. He told me that it’s a saying - I don’t know many idioms.

Coincidentally, I heard the meaning of the phrase on the word game radio show. The saying comes from England. It means that things are easily accomplished when you have connections, and in this case, Bob is the Prime Minister of England.

I was listening to a podcast about how the Supreme Court is about to throw out affirmative action. One of the arguments by the conservative majority is why is race the main factor to consider for diversity; why not legacies, why not socio-economic status? This is their counterargument to those who want to keep affirmative action because racial diversity is reflective of society and benefits all students.

While I don’t agree with their argument about race, I was thinking, legacies are a universal tool that ensures that the silver spooners can pass their privilege to their offspring. G.W. Bush got into Yale even though he was an average student. Getting into an elite school is easy when George H.W. is your dad and Sen. Prescott Bush is your grandfather, both Yale alumni. Arguments against giving the disenfranchised a chance to excel seem dull when compared to how some universities, places of work give opportunities based on who their ancestors are, if they are the children of Abraham. Why aren’t the same protestors against affirmative action not arguing against those kids who took their place or their children’s place based only on pedigree? Why do they only focus on race?

## **AUTHOR BIO**

Kei Fujimura has been a Calvary Deacon for two years. She likes reading/ watching murder mysteries, cooking and solving crossword puzzles and the Spelling Bee. Most of all, she likes spending time with her son, husband and dog.



# MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:9–12

Now concerning love of the brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anyone write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do love all the brothers and sisters throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, beloved, to do so more and more, to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we directed you, so that you may behave properly towards outsiders and be dependent on no one.

## REFLECTION BY ALEXA FRANKENBERG

This passage seems like at odd fit at first for Advent. Isn't Advent a time for preparation, excitement, and hope, not for a laundry list of being told how to behave? Can't I just light my Advent wreath, sing Carols, & try to stay warm? Why does this seem too much like a performance review that says, yeah you're doing great, but instead of celebrating, here's more to do?

But perhaps reading this passage now is some of the point. Life as a Christian, responding to God's love and the grace shown to us, is a constant process of reflecting on how we can put that love into action. This passage very clearly says that while love is important, a love of one another that is taught by God, that we are called to more. That call to do more isn't just when we are at church and doesn't take time off during times like the festive Advent season but is a consistent call for our lives.

Paul couldn't have foreseen our always streaming, 24/7 social media world, but these admonitions to live quietly and mind our own business may be all the more important to hear today. I don't believe this advice as well as the instruction to "be dependent on no one" as ways to live out God's love is contradictory to our understanding of living in community. Rather, it's how we live together, and Jesus's unassuming birth can be a guide for us.



The ultimate act of love through the birth of our Savior happened outside of major cities and was not trumpeted far and wide; today it wouldn't be made known by wall-to-wall coverage on all the media channels. So how can we choose love by avoiding unnecessary conflict and gossip and show who we are? What's the quiet star we choose to follow as an exemplar for our lives and in doing so, we demonstrate our love for others and for God?

### **AUTHOR BIO**

Alexa Frankenberg currently serves as an elder on Session & member of the Living Sanctuary & Racial Equity Initiative teams. She leads a statewide child care provider union, but her even greater loves are her niece & nephew, hiking, and the Golden State Warriors.





# TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: ISA. 41:14–20

Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you insect Israel!

I will help you, says the Lord; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

Now, I will make of you a threshing-sledge, sharp, new, and having teeth; you shall thresh the mountains and crush them, and you shall make the hills like chaff. You shall winnow them and the wind shall carry them away, and the tempest shall scatter them. Then you shall rejoice in the Lord; in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys;

I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive;

I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together, so that all may see and know, all may consider and understand, that the hand of the Lord has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it.

## REFLECTION BY PRISCILLA C. DWYER

Have no fear...It is I who help you, declares the Lord; (Isaiah 41:14.)

Today is my younger grandson's third birthday. While I joy in him, I am concerned, if not fearful, about the world he will grow up in. We are all aware of the divisiveness and threats in our country and the world today even as we celebrate the Advent Season. War, drought, famine, all things experienced by people in the time of the prophet Isaiah and now. I welcome the reminders from scripture that God has our back and will see us through hard times now and in the future as has been done in the past.

As the angel said to Mary, "Do not be afraid", so we also must trust in the Lord to be with us today and all the days to come.



**PRAYER:**

Thank you Creator God for your faithfulness to us in times of joy and in times of hardship and for the reminder to trust that you have our backs. Amen

**AUTHOR BIO**

Priscilla C. Dwyer is concluding yet another term on Session and continues as a member of the Personnel Mission Team. As a wife, mother of three adults and Nana of four, she loves time with family, friends and alone with a book (food and wine also). A community of faith is vital for her.





# WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 15:1–6

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.’ But Abram said, ‘O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’ And Abram said, ‘You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.’ But the word of the Lord came to him, ‘This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.’ He brought him outside and said, ‘Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

## REFLECTION BY ZOE POINDEXTER

God told Abram that he was not to be afraid, but Abram told him, “O Lord, what will you give me, for I continue childless.” Abram had trouble believing in God’s promise, but God reassures Abram that his wishes will be met and all he has to do is believe.

Can you trust in God’s promise today?

## AUTHOR BIO

Zoe Poindexter is a seventh grader. She loves playing basketball with her team, helping other people, and learning new things. Her parents are Gabriele Poindexter and Jack Poindexter. She has a sister named Eve who is eleven years old. Zoe is a member of this year’s Confirmation Class.





Isaiah 11:1-10

Harriet Lang 2022



# THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: RUTH 1:14–18

Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. So she said, ‘See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.’ But Ruth said, ‘Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you!

Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge;  
your people shall be my people, and your God my God.  
Where you die, I will die— there will I be buried.

May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!’  
When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

## REFLECTION BY ROBIN MORJIKIAN

The lines of this passage, “Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you” and “Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge,” are poignant and unforgettable. They reminded me of something I witnessed at Calvary in December 2019 when a handful of volunteers arrived to support a Honduran father and son as they awaited to be reunited with 4 other members of their family who were travelling overnight from San Diego. The family was seeking asylum in the U.S. and had been separated for nearly a year.

Just like the women in the scripture passage—Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth—this was a vulnerable time of fear and uncertainty, of being alone in an unfamiliar place, without money or the protection of extended family. The situation could have felt hopeless. Yet, on the road to Judah, Ruth convinced Naomi she will never leave her. Ruth’s faithful allegiance, courage, and steadfastness was tangible just as it was at Calvary that day.



When we opened the front doors to the church, out on the sidewalk I saw a frightened little girl, clutching the hands of Xochitl S., an organizer with Central American Resource Center (CARECEN LA). Xochi had accompanied the mother and her 3 children from the moment they were released from the shelter in San Diego until they were reunited with their family in San Francisco. Xochi never let go of the little girl's hand until she was ready.

Question: Who might need to hold your hand this week? Is there someone in your life who hungers for human connection, who's forgotten you love them and that you will never leave them?

### **AUTHOR BIO**

Robin Morjikian is Calvary's Director of Development & Volunteer Ministries and has been a member of the church since 1995. When she's not at church, she's leaning in to being an empty-nester, hiking in the Presidio, and making soup.





# FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: PSALM 146:5-10

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith for ever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.

The Lord watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord!

## REFLECTION BY JEN GEE

This passage brought to mind a phrase I heard in the early months of the Covid pandemic while talking with a client about navigating that very uncertain time. She'd heard someone say that "Hope is a discipline" but didn't know the source. I found it to be a profoundly spiritual concept.

Eventually, I discovered it was said by Mariame Kaba ([www.mariamekaba.com](http://www.mariamekaba.com)), an organizer and educator whose work centers on dismantling the prison industrial complex, transformative justice, and supporting youth leadership development. Here's the full quote:

"Hope doesn't preclude feeling sadness or frustration or anger or any other emotion that makes total sense. Hope isn't an emotion, you know? Hope is not optimism. Hope is a discipline... we have to practice it every single day."

As people of faith, we have hope in the promise and example of Jesus. Just like understanding that true agape love is an act of the will vs. an emotion, hope isn't really an emotion either; hope is a discipline.



We can anchor to our hope of God's grace in times of darkness as well as when things are going well. Practicing hope as a spiritual discipline enables us to live a life of possibilities and abundance vs. despair and scarcity.

Holding on to hope strengthens my conviction that as followers of Jesus we can help make God's kingdom real on earth as it is in heaven. May we practice hope every day!

### **AUTHOR BIO**

Jen Gee is currently the Elder for Children's Ministries, has been a Calvary member for 20+ years, and loves hearing the questions and thoughts on faith of our young people. She's a coach and consultant and in her free time enjoys having a good meal with friends, walking around our beautiful city, and traveling.





# SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: LUKE 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, ‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
And the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth;  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

## REFLECTION BY MICHAEL CONLEY

I must confess, my eyes often glaze over when one of our Sunday lectionary readings includes a passage with a long list of names, or a genealogy, or some obscure geographical or historical context. It just rarely seems relevant and not worth the effort to focus and ponder it all. So, when I looked at this passage and realized it started with a list of names and a bunch of obscure historical context, my first thought was “ugh! Please, anything else.” But as I’ve had time to live with this passage a little, it occurs to me that that very list of names might be the point. Placing John—the crazy guy who eats locusts and lives out in the wilderness—into the context of the powerful rulers and “influencers” of his time, reminds us that time and again, God chose the most unlikely of women and men to bear his most important messages.

God didn’t go to the high-priest Annas and instruct him to tell the people that Christ was coming, to “prepare the way!” That would make sense to me. When the aliens land they always say “take me to your leader” not, “take me to the strange, unhoused guy living in the alley behind the Safeway.” So maybe the fact that God chose John to



bear the message of the advent of Jesus is a timely reminder that God can and does use anyone and everyone to be the messengers of hope, peace, joy, and love in the world. Not just in John's time, but in our time.

What message is God asking us to bring to our corner of the world this Advent? We may or may not be among the rich or the powerful, but, like John, our voice can be heard. Maybe we can help "prepare the way" by volunteering to help those who have less than us. Perhaps we can "make the rough ways smooth" by patiently listening to friends or family who we disagree with, instead of insisting on our point of view. Maybe in order for "all flesh to see the salvation of God" we must ourselves make an effort to be God's voice of kindness and mercy as we make our way through a sometimes rude and chaotic city. Instead of the Mayor, or the Supervisors, or the Archbishop, or a tech mogul, maybe God is asking us, like John, to prepare the way.



## **AUTHOR BIO**

Michael Conley is Calvary's Director of Music Ministries. He loves movies, books, shoes, and antiques, and when not at Calvary may be found most of the time re-decorating his apartment with his husband, Tony, and newly-acquired Shih-Tsu overlord, Oscar.



## **THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT:**

# **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2022**

### **SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 35:1–4**

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who are of a fearful heart, ‘Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.’

### **REFLECTION BY VICTOR FLOYD**

Do not fear? Seriously?

More than once, I heard liberation theologian Robert McAfee Brown’s warning regarding the traditional Advent salutation offered by prophets and angels alike: “Fear not.” Brown said that when a biblical character begins with a “fear not” it’s probably a good time to start worrying.

“Fear not” the angels say to the shepherds before they go to offer gifts to Jesus, the nemesis of empire. “Do not fear” says the prophet today. Why? Because God is on the way.

Wait now, what’s this next part about “vengeance and terrible recompense”? That’s on the way, too? To me? Well, that sounds awful. What if God’s vengeance has my name on it? And about the terribleness of God’s recompense (aka, reparation), how much do I need to settle this deal? Is God coming in spite of me—or because of me? Fear not, yeah, right.



Perhaps we're a bit arrogant when we think it all depends on us—on me. Each of us is part of something bigger. You and I are essential members of the Body of Christ. It takes each of us, all of us, for the church to add up to a whole, functioning organism. It's not about me. It's not about you. It's forever and always about us. We are the Body. So, if God's owes us one—whether vengeance or recompense—let us experience it together, not as me me me, but as we we we. Pro tip: God's vengeance is goodness. God's recompense is grace. Fear not, for these are tidings of great joy intended, ultimately, for all people, no exceptions. Perhaps a little spiritual angst, from time to time, does a Body good.

I am of the mind that this passage is better read with the last verses first. Try it. After reading about God's terrible power, go back and re-read the promises. The desert blooms. Crocuses erupt from scorched earth. Picturesque destinations bow down in awe as God's beauty and lovingkindness breaks into every wilderness, even yours. Isaiah urges us to continue our strength training. Why? Because God is a lot, and our God is preparing to knock our socks off. Together, we're riding up the first incline on God's roller coaster to salvation. Hands up! We're taking the plunge! And our fears are giving way to the thrill of expectation.

## **AUTHOR BIO**

Victor Floyd joined Calvary's staff in 2013. He and husband Lou Grosso host their Guatemalan "son-of-choice" Peter Pérez in their Western Addition home. Former pastor of the historic Metropolitan Community Church of SF, Victor is a graduate of Pacific School of Religion, Indiana University School of Music and the Merola Opera Program. His ministry explores the intersectionality of care, justice and music. Serving Calvary Seniors, Victor is a trained chaplain certified in Integrative Medical Education and also advises our Board of Deacon. He is a core team leader with Faith in Action Bay Area - PICO California.



# MONDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: PSALM 42:1-8

As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, 'Where is your God?' These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival. Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your cataracts; all your waves and your billows have gone over me. By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.





## **REFLECTION BY DAVID BARNES**

I was at an A.A. meeting with a friend and it was one of my moments of palpable despair. I was doing my best to keep my head above water and mostly failing and so, collapsed into my own miserable space. He knew me and knew me well and could see the intensity of my sadness and said, “you’re like that thirsty deer in the bible”. The look on my face must have been that obvious because he reached into his pocket, pulled out a well-worn bible and turned to Psalm 42 and started to read. I sat there in tears, listened to the words and with his urging, poured out everything in my heart to him. He listened carefully and said, you know, it’s okay to do that with God too.

That was my introduction to the Psalms and to this day, Psalm 42 is what I read when I am going through a particularly difficult time. The new thought (to me) that God was really interested in all aspects of my life, even the sad parts was a revelation and something that I believe many of us aren’t ready to accept. We share our joys and immediate needs, but rarely ever just let it all out. The psalms gave me a template for prayer if I am being honest and to this day I still follow that template.

Our God is our God, 24/7 and if we are truly going to realize a relationship with God that lives into that idea, we need to be honest and open and willing to give our whole selves to God and not just the parts that we believe are acceptable. By offering ourselves, all of ourselves, our thirst might never dissipate but it might be quenched if only for a while! AMEN

## **AUTHOR BIO**

David Barnes is Calvary’s Manager for Hospitality and Engagement. He provides support for the church in facility management, pastoral care, and event support as well as supporting other lay leadership groups such as church Elders or Deacons. He has been a Warriors fan since before it was popular to be a Warriors fan and enjoys walking in fun, brightly colored tennis shoes.



# TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: JUDE 17–25

But you, beloved, must remember the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; for they said to you, ‘In the last time there will be scoffers, indulging their own ungodly lusts.’ It is these worldly people, devoid of the Spirit, who are causing divisions. But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on some who are wavering; save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies.

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.

## REFLECTION BY SUSIE WILLIAMS

I have a big brother. He looks like me but he votes very differently. He’s in the military as well as law enforcement. We have learned over the years that if we stick to our similarities, like loving our children, enjoying a good book, and laughing at cat videos, we can get along just fine. Despite our divisions, we stick to our faith and we find common ground.

This passage calls to mind all the people in our country that are “causing divisions”. And of course, it lays bare my lightning fast reaction to blame those people for everything that’s wrong. The whole division is really someone else’s fault, right? But when the steam out of my ears slows to a trickle, I’m able to stand in silence with God and see that all the people are doing what they think is right. I personally don’t believe anyone is outright evil. Everyone’s trying to get their needs met. My brother is trying to feel safe in a chaotic world. So am I.



This passage reminds me that I can find peace in these divisions, I am instructed, “But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit.” So I do just that. I pray. And when those dank green mists of judgment part, I’m able to see the humanity in all people. I can love all the people. As instructed, I have mercy on all who are struggling to find safety, security, and love, in whatever way they can.

A year ago, my brother and I weren’t speaking. My mom was dying. Things were bad. So I prayed. And we found a path forward, a rocky path, but a path lined with love, a path watched over by God.

It was in the darkness of death and dying that I found that path with my sibling. When you’re in the dark, sometimes all you want to do is get out of there. I forget this fact daily, but I believe there are treasures to be found in the darkness, if you look around. And pray.

As we spend advent waiting in the darkness, let’s look around, not for the light, but for the special treasures that can only be found in the dark.

#### **PRAYER:**

Gracious God, let us see where we just might be wrong about something. Let the cracks allow in the light. Help us to stand in awareness of our judgment of ourselves and others. Help us in our efforts to see past the divisions, help us to have mercy on all the people in your world in order to make it a better place, worthy of your creations.



#### **AUTHOR BIO**

Susie Williams sings alto in Calvary’s Chancel Choir and is just completing her first year of service as a Calvary deacon. Her two kids are in Boy Scout Troop 14, so some weeks she’s at Calvary 5 days a week, and there’s no place she’d rather be. She never leaves the house without a sketchbook and a smattering of colored pencils.



# WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: ZECHARIAH 8:9-13

Thus says the Lord of hosts: Let your hands be strong—you that have recently been hearing these words from the mouths of the prophets who were present when the foundation was laid for the rebuilding of the temple, the house of the Lord of hosts. For before those days there were no wages for people or for animals, nor was there any safety from the foe for those who went out or came in, and I set them all against one other. But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as in the former days, says the Lord of hosts. For there shall be a sowing of peace; the vine shall yield its fruit, the ground shall give its produce, and the skies shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. Just as you have been a cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you and you shall be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong.

## REFLECTION BY SALLY DURGAN

The last time I had blistered hands was on a Thanksgiving Day several pre-pandemic years ago. The day before, a small and mighty team assembled in the Calvary kitchen to prepare for the Deacons' annual community dinner. After peeling and chopping hundreds (ok, maybe tens) of pounds of potatoes, passing them through a Foley food mill, boiling cranberries in a syrup that would magically gel into sauce, I was physically tired and also grateful to join other sets of hands, transforming ingredients into a meal.

I've learned that Zechariah was a Hebrew Prophet and this text references the rebuilding of the Babylon temple that was destroyed 70 years earlier (did they also struggle with permits and escalating construction costs?). There were hardships in the past and God promises they will be saved and be a blessing in the future.



What stands out to me is the repetition of the phrase “Let your hands be strong.” Taking this literally, I think of the two wonderful massage therapists, Iris and Roberto, who graced participants of this year’s Deacon spiritual retreat with hand and neck massages. At the “Touch” station in the courtyard, they shared their skills and warm presence with all who visited.

Strong hands fuel the cookie army, preparing many dozens of treats each Sunday, keep the Jackson Street garden trimmed and healthy, and maintain the stained glass windows and all other church facilities in top condition. These are physical acts, done with love and in service of the community.

Hands can also be a figure of speech, representing the whole. This may be encouragement for each of us as individuals and all of us as a community as we work towards a brighter future: “Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong.”

## **AUTHOR BIO**

Sally Durgan joined Calvary in 2006 and has served as a Deacon, Elder and on Churchwide Nominating Committee. She’s been on weeklong silent meditation retreats which prepared her for pandemic life, but more often enjoys walking all over San Francisco, listening to podcasts and audiobooks, outdoor dining with friends and spoiling her cat, Pepper.





# THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 3:27–29

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

## REFLECTION BY AMY HOCKMAN

All of you are one in Christ Jesus...imagine that. We are one. One community of faith. One common connection of love, faith and hope. At Calvary, I can settle in comfortably to that idea. Outside Calvary, I often want to separate myself from those Christians – the ones that, for whatever reason, don't align with my political views, proselytize too boldly for my comfort, etc. Yet, we are all one in Christ Jesus.

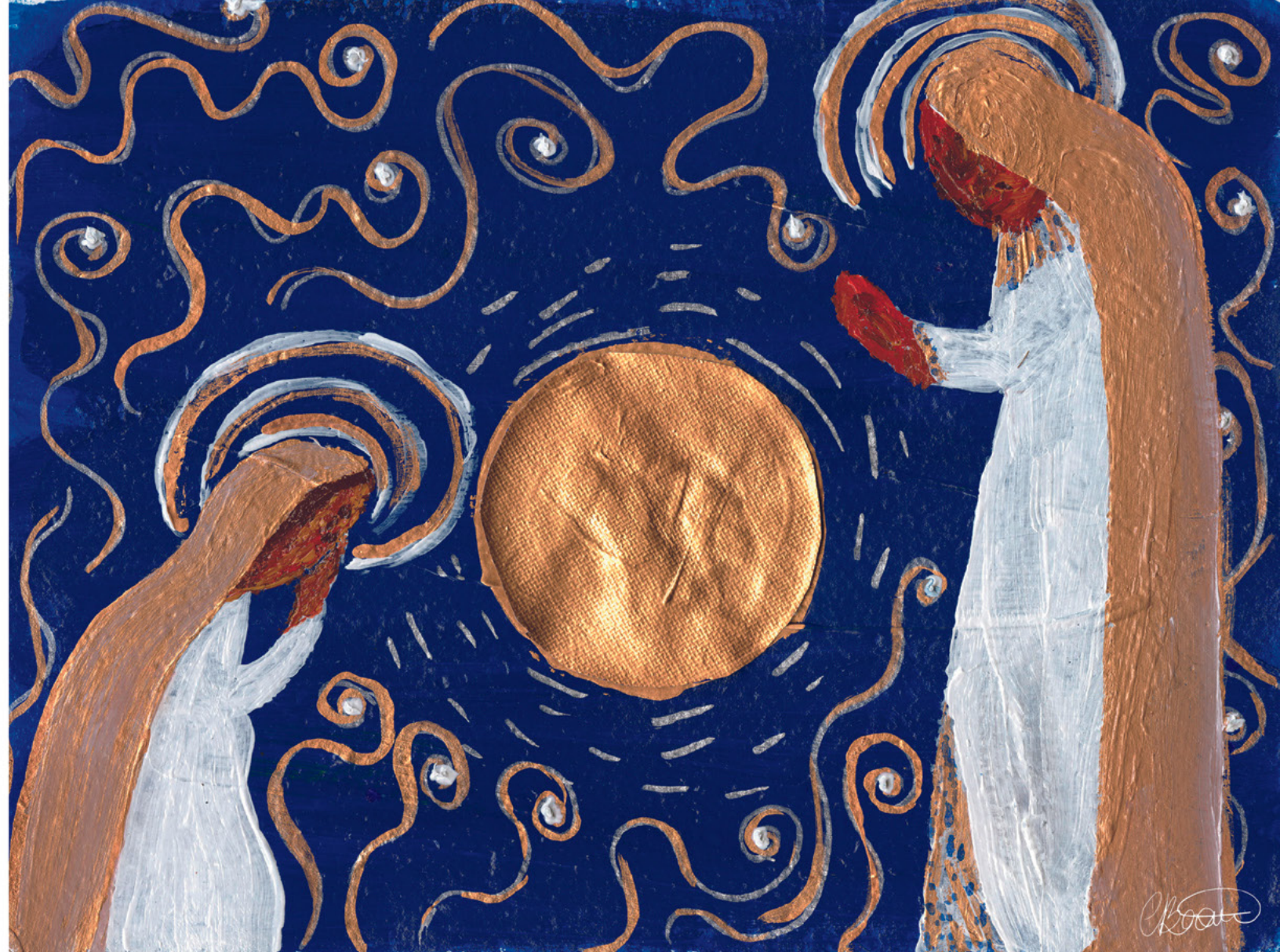
In fact, we are all descended from Abraham – Christianity, Judaism and Islam. I was in my 20's when I learned that Abraham didn't just belong to Christians. I found it comforting and connecting ... we are all one. Our faith connects us even when our politics divide us. We all share a common bond.

In this time of Advent, I am grateful to belong to Christ and be one in Christ Jesus. As we prepare to celebrate Christ's birth, let us seek to be more open to being one in Christ Jesus and open to connection and love with all of God's children.

## AUTHOR BIO

Amy Hockman is currently serving as Elder of Finance and has been a member of Calvary since the late 1990's. She was married at Calvary and has happily raised her two children at Calvary. When not at church, Amy loves to be outdoors, read, travel and hang out with her family.





**MARY'S GOLDEN ANNUNCIATION  
BY CARMELLE BEAUGELIN**



# FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: 2 SAMUEL 7:18–22

Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and said, ‘Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord God; you have spoken also of your servant’s house for a great while to come. May this be instruction for the people, O Lord God! And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord God! Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have wrought all this greatness, so that your servant may know it. Therefore you are great, O Lord God; for there is no one like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

## REFLECTION BY KATE BIJUR

In this passage it states, “For there is no one like you, and there is no God besides you.” We are created in God’s image, so this can mean that everyone is a different person, and that there is no one like you. In fact, David asks, “Who am I?” Well, you are amazing, and you should feel good about yourself because there is nobody like you! I know there is one God, and that there has never been another God. We should all worship the God that we have, and never let God down. Kind of like how in my house we follow our parents and listen to them. We never want to let them down and feel disappointed in us. Do you know how amazing you are? God made you and loves you.

## AUTHOR BIO

Kate Bijur is in 7th grade and currently in Calvary’s Confirmation Class. She loves to play volleyball for fun and is twelve years old.







# **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2022**

## **SCRIPTURE: PSALM 80:3-7; 17-19**

Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved. O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure.

You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves.

Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself. Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name. Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

## **REFLECTION BY KEITH SAMUEL**

Psalm 80's thrice-repeated refrain is a communal cry in which the worshipping community calls upon God, for deliverance, to rescue them from trouble.

The prayer is a lament by a community undergoing crisis, or on behalf of others who are suffering. (I am reminded of God's Red Sea deliverance of his people from Egypt and the prayerful chants of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during the Civil Rights era.)

It asserts that God has the love and grace to guide the faithful through the shadow of the valley of death.

In my youth when my walk in faith was weak, I started to note all the various trials and challenges God had delivered me from. After a few years, I amassed quite a little book of 'miracles' that helped remind me of the steadfastness of God's mercy and Grace in difficult times. Sadly, that little reminder is long lost but instead, I now rely on my faith and the trust of God's promises. ... to work everything out for our good, "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."



I am not so naïve to think that bad things do not happen to good people, we see the Holocaust and even the recent attack by Russia on the people of Ukraine and ask ourselves, where is God in all this?! Unfortunately, there are some questions in this life we will never know the answers to. God's ways are not our ways.

In scripture, God's people waited thousands of years for deliverance and for our savior, Jesus Christ. In fact, a big part of the Christian walk is spent waiting, just as a farmer patiently waits for his harvest, we know the time of joy and plenty will eventually come. We are reminded, God acts to save God's people, then God's glory is revealed.

## **AUTHOR BIO**

Keith Samuel is the Property Manager of Calvary Presbyterian Church and has been here since 2015. When not at church, he enjoys classic movies, historical and theological documentaries, good food, good wine and being active. Keith is also classic car enthusiast and has owned several European imports over the years.





## **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2022**

### **SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 7:10–16**

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, 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. Then Isaiah said: ‘Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

### **REFLECTION BY AUSTIN LEE TSOI**

My mom says that Immanuel means “God with us” in Hebrew. I like this because although I sometimes like being alone, other times I get scared when I am alone. I’m not sure if it helps to hear that God is with me, but I like when my parents are with me. And God is sort of like a parent.

### **AUTHOR BIO**

Austin Lee Tsoi is the child of Joann Lee and Mike Tsoi. He likes going downstairs to play in the lower level. When not at Calvary, he likes to read, play Legos, and play video games.





Luke 16-55

Hannah 2022



# MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: 1 SAMUEL 2:1–10

‘Hannah prayed and said, ‘My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exalted in my God. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in my victory. ‘There is no Holy One like the Lord, no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts.

‘He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honour. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and on them he has set the world. ‘He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness; for not by might does one prevail.

‘The Lord! His adversaries shall be shattered; the Most High will thunder in heaven.

‘The Lord will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king, and exalt the power of his anointed.’

## REFLECTION BY CARTER READ

In this passage, it talks about how God will help those who need it. For example: the passage talks about how when people are down and when life is hard, God can always bring you up and help you. We must have faith in God, believing that God will help you when things are hard.

Is life hard for you right now? God can help you like God helped Hannah.



## **AUTHOR BIO**

Carter Read is participating in this year's Confirmation Class. She plays volleyball and likes to hang out with her friends. She is thirteen years old.





# **TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2022**

## **SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 21:1–7**

The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Now Sarah said, ‘God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.’ And she said, ‘Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.’

## **REFLECTION BY SAM STEWART**

This passage shows us that God can perform miracles. God is much different than humanity. Miracles are things that happen and are unexplainable by humans and must be done by God. Without God, this story would never have happened.

What is something that has happened in your life that could not have happened without God?

## **AUTHOR BIO**

Sam Stewart is in 8th grade and is part of this year’s Confirmation Class. At church, he likes the homily best. Outside of church, he likes flying and wants to be a pilot one day.





leup



# WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 1:1–17

An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

## REFLECTION BY ALISON FAISON

At the beginning of Matthew's gospel, we see the patriarchal genealogy of Jesus. Five women and forty men are mentioned in this lineage. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba (wife of Uriah), and Mary mother of Jesus were interesting women for Matthew to



name. One would think that he would name the five model matriarchs: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, and Mary. Theologians wonder why these particular women were listed, especially since three of them were Gentiles by birth: Tamar and Rahab (Canaanite women), Ruth (Moabite), Bathsheba was Gentile through her marriage to Uriah the Hittite. Some say that the fact that all of these women were subjected to either being sex-workers, a landless matriarch or an unwed pregnant teen illustrated the point that Jesus came “not for the righteous, but for sinners.” Matthew 9:13. The patriarchs listed here definitely fulfilled sinner status in that many of them used or enacted violence upon women in the name of their own patriarchal power. Many of these men made it culturally acceptable for women to be penniless and without legal power, thereby, making them and their children completely dependent on the financial and social capital men held.

We approach Christ’s birth, singing songs about gentle Mary, the Mother of God, an unwed refugee teen who gave birth next to animals in a basement floor of some stranger’s home. All the while, she knows that her son will die a horrible death when he is a young adult. There is nothing ethereal or heavenly about her life unless you look to the way she faithfully accepted God’s call. Today we clearly see the patriarchy thrive and fight to shave away women’s already-established civil and human rights for the sake of dominance. Anytime a woman is denied access to healthcare or to a place at the table or ballot box, she and her community suffer. Let us hold the roles of Christ’s maternal ancestors Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary in our hearts.

## **AUTHOR BIO**

Alison Faison is the Director of Children and Family Ministries and has been since 2014. When she’s not at church, she likes to spend time with her family, do yoga, knit, garden, and sing. She has been a member at Calvary for over 24 years.



# THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 33:17–22

Your eyes will see the king in his beauty; they will behold a land that stretches far away.

Your mind will muse on the terror: ‘Where is the one who counted? Where is the one who weighed the tribute? Where is the one who counted the towers?’ No longer will you see the insolent people, the people of an obscure speech that you cannot comprehend, stammering in a language that you cannot understand. Look on Zion, the city of our appointed festivals! Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, an immovable tent, whose stakes will never be pulled up, and none of whose ropes will be broken.

But there the Lord in majesty will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams, where no galley with oars can go, nor stately ship can pass. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our ruler, the Lord is our king; he will save us.

## REFLECTION BY BRUGMANN BARRET

Here I think that God is saying that God is a refuge and a safe place. You have to have faith in God, and you will be safe and saved. Even when life is rough and you wonder where God is, you have to have faith that God is there, and don't give up.

God will save us, and God is a place where nothing can touch or harm us.

How has God been a safe place for you?

## AUTHOR BIO

Brugmann Barret is in 7th grade at Town School for Boys. He is a member of this year's Calvary Confirmation Class.





Like 15-21



# FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2022

## SCRIPTURE: LUKE 1:46B–55

And Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.’

## REFLECTION BY JACK OSPINA

In this passage Mary has gotten pregnant and thinks that the people will look down on her, but she has faith in God because God can reverse anything. We know this because it says God can lift up the poor and send the rich away empty.

What do you think God should reverse today, so that all people can live well?

## AUTHOR BIO

Jack Ospina is a thirteen year old male who likes to play basketball. His favorite food is steak with french fries. He is a member of Calvary's Confirmation Class.





**GENEALOGY OF CHRIST**  
**BY REV. LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN**



**CHRISTMAS EVE:**

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2022**

**SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 60:1–6**

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

**REFLECTION BY MARCI AULD GLASS**

We often read this passage in worship on Epiphany, when we remember the magi traveling to worship baby Jesus by following the star. “Nations shall come to your light....”

But Isaiah wasn't writing about Jesus, necessarily. He was giving Israel a prophecy about a reversal of their bad fortunes. If you read the rest of chapter 60, you'll see that instead of foreign powers occupying Israel, they will instead come to give gifts. Instead of the destruction of Jerusalem, there will be foreign “invaders” there to be the building crew to re-build the city.

He's reminding the people that whether armies invade, or fortunes reverse and prosperity invades, people are called to trust in God. God is the star we follow. Not fortune. Not fear.



In verse 19, Isaiah writes:

The sun shall no longer be  
your light by day,  
nor for brightness shall the moon  
give light to you by night;\*  
but the Lord will be your everlasting light,  
and your God will be your glory.

As we journey through Advent, toward the birth of Jesus, we remember how Jesus becomes a kind of lodestar for us, a navigational tool as we seek to live out our faith in love.

**PRAYER:**

Oh Lord, you are the star we long to follow. Give us faith to keep on the path to follow your star, even when we can't see you shining through the clouds of our worries, or the brightness of our busy lives. Amen.



**AUTHOR BIO**

Marci Auld Glass is Pastor and Head of Staff at Calvary Presbyterian Church. She serves on the Board of the Covenant Network of Presbyterians, Planned Parenthood's Clergy Advocacy Board, Columbia Theological Seminary's Alumni Board, and the San Francisco Interfaith Council. In her free time, she studies the Enneagram, hikes as much as her new bionic knee will allow, and plays the cello.



**CHRISTMAS DAY:**

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2022**

**SCRIPTURE: LUKE 2:8–20**

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!’

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.





## **REFLECTION BY JOANN H LEE**

One piece of advice I got when I was first pregnant was to limit the number of people who come visit you in the hospital. I understood the well-intentions behind that – you're exhausted, trying to bond as a new family, and that time at the hospital is so short that it is probably best spent healing, recovering, practicing feeding, and bonding.

But I also wanted to share this amazing new life with the world. I wanted others to enjoy that new baby smell, to have an opportunity to hold a newborn, and to introduce this tiny, new human to the world! So with all three of my post-birth hospital stays, we always had a steady stream of family and friends coming to visit. And other than recognizing I probably looked my absolute worst, I really enjoyed them!

I'm not sure, however, that I would have particularly enjoyed strangers coming to visit me! In this passage, we hear that shepherds – shepherds that Mary and Joseph did not know! – went “with haste” to go and visit the Christ-child.

When considering the shepherds of the Christmas story, historian Paul Maier said it well: “If resorting to symbolism ... the shepherds stood for the cross-sectional, average Judean — quite literally, ‘the man on the night shift.’” Shepherds had a difficult job that earned no rank in society. Yet, God chose shepherds to receive the glorious angelic announcement of the birth of Christ.

I'm heartened to read that Mary was still able to treasure and ponder these things in her heart in spite of her unusual birth story and the strange visitors who came to pay homage. And I am heartened that average people of no rank, like many of us, have access to the baby Jesus born to us this day! Let us heed the news of the angels and go with haste to babe in the manger!

## **AUTHOR BIO**

Joann JH Lee is the Associate Pastor for Community Formation at Calvary and has been since 2014. When she's not at church, she likes to read, watch movies, play with her three children, and drink boba. She loves that San Francisco has some of the best boba in the country!



## CHRISTMAS DAY: YOUR REFLECTION

How has this advent season strengthened your faith?

[illegible]







## NOTES

[illegible]



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THE COURAGEOUS CHOICE  
BY REV. LISLE GWYNN GARRITY**