



4th ANNUAL  
ADVENT DEVOTIONS  
REDMOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
2008

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*The original artwork contained in this Advent Devotional was prepared by Matthew Fletcher. We thank Matthew for his hard work and willingness to share his drawings.*

*Our thanks to all who participated in the process!*



## Introduction

This is the fourth year that I, with the help of my husband Dave, have had the privilege of editing the Advent Devotions booklet. Mostly this is just a massive “cut and paste” exercise because the quality and thoughtfulness of the contributor’s writing is such that there is no need to do more than fix the occasional typing mistake.

Each year I have been struck by the diversity of experiences that this seemingly homogeneous group of people have had. And I stand in awe of the depth of understanding, commitment and faith displayed in the stories that are told within these pages.

The Adult Spiritual Formation Team is excited to be able to present this booklet. We thank all who have helped make this booklet possible. It takes a lot of writers, illustrators and behind the scenes help and encouragement to make this possible.

We hope that you will find time in this busy Advent season to slow down and reflect on your relationship with God and that this booklet will help you remember why we celebrate Christmas.

If you have children or grandchildren in your family we also encourage you to take a Children’s Advent booklet.

Jane Wickert

# The Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath comes to us from Scandinavia and Germany. It is a dramatic way of portraying a dark and waiting world that experiences the dawning light of Christ. The wreath should be in the form of a circle because it has no beginning and no end; therefore, it is a good picture of eternity and of God's everlasting love for us. The wreath is usually covered with evergreen since this is the color of life and growth. It symbolizes our growing faith in Jesus Christ. The wreath has four candles, one for each Advent Sunday. The candles for the first, second, and fourth Sundays are purple (or violet) to symbolize our penitence and preparation. The candle for the third Sunday is pink as a symbol of joy—which designates "Rejoice Ye." A large white candle is placed in the middle of the wreath. It is the Christ candle and is lighted on Christmas Eve. Families can benefit from having a personal advent wreath at home. For each Sunday of Advent, plan a 10-15 minute time to sit close to each other and to the wreath. We offer four family services in this booklet for families to use; be sure everyone has a chance to participate each week.



Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Service for the First Sunday of Advent (Prophecy candle)

Turn off the lights and light one of the purple candles. As it is being lit say: "Jesus says, I am the light of the world. Those who follow me will have the light of the world and never walk in darkness."

Read either Luke 1:26-38 or Matthew 1:18-25.

Sing a song together or listen to a recorded carol or hymn. Suggestions: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," "Jesus Loves Me," "Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus."

Optional with young children, read Isaiah 42:16 and/or Isaiah 9:2-7.

Close with prayer to thank God for his promise to send a Messiah. Each person may pray, if they like, for God to help them remember the true meaning of Christmas.



Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Hallelujah

Scripture: PSALM 146

Through this past year of personal turmoil, I have often been reminded of my misplaced trust. I have so often depended on the PEOPLE in my life for comfort, support and guidance. As a result, I have been disappointed, often distraught. The inadequacies of people, “princes” as verse 3 calls them, though well-intentioned, have urged me to remember who it is that I must always trust, who I can always turn to for comfort and support. God sent his only Son for me, for you. When I am in trouble, I can ask for help and when that help comes, I praise HIM. The LORD gives help to all who need it, even me and you. HALLELUJAH!

Prayer: Eternal God, in this season of wonder and expectation, I praise you! I humbly accept the gift of your Son and remind myself that my help comes from my relationship with HIM.  
Amen

Marjorie Gates

Monday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008

## Peace In The Midst Of A Storm

Scripture: Psalm 3

In this day and age it is hard to not be intimidated with all the world pits against us Christians. Our life is challenging and full of adversity. Yet as I read the words that David cried to the Lord, I sense hope. While the world seems tilted towards the rich and powerful, we must be diligent and trust in the Lord. As Philippians 4:13 so boldly proclaims, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

When life throws a wrench our way we must only simply ask for help and God is ever-present, ever-waiting to lend a helping hand. There is no power of hell or scheme of man that can remove us from the protection of the Lord. Never fret my brothers and sisters in Christ for as we all know from the conclusion of Psalm 3, "Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing is upon your people."

Prayer: Lord, grant us strength to stand up for what we believe in. Help us to have the diligence to constantly strive to grow closer to you so that we may become your blessed.

Colin Dorn

Tuesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008

## Looking for Jesus

Scripture: Luke 20:9-18

This is the Parable of the Tenants. The Gospel writers seem to have thought this was a very important parable, since it appears in Matthew, Mark, and Luke! Arguably, this is one of the clearest statements that Jesus understood his death would be coming in a few days. It is also one of the clearest statements from Jesus that, even if rejected, he will continue to seek out others to receive his gift of sacrifice. So what can we draw from this parable as we enter the season of Advent and the coming of Christmas? We need to open our eyes to see God's servants bringing his message as well as be his servant to others: someone who opens a door; someone carrying a package for someone else; a plate of cookies for someone who is no longer able to cook; or, an evening of companionship for someone with little family in the area. All of these are ways to be God's servants. So, during this busy Christmas season, let's open our eyes to see Jesus, to accept Jesus, to not cast him out and kill him, but to welcome him into our hearts and our lives.

Prayer: Lord, Open our eyes to see your servants that touch our lives. Allow us to be your servants that touch other's lives. Amen

Ron Dorn

Wednesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008

## Render Unto Caesar

Scripture: Luke 20:19-26

The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people. Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. So the spies questioned him: "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" He saw through their duplicity and said to them, "Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it?" "Caesar's," they replied. He said to them, "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent.

In the midst of a recession, with a \$700 billion Wall Street bailout recently approved, and the Holiday season upon us, money and material things are on everyone's mind. Is my job safe? Can I afford everything I want? Can I afford everything I need? What's happening to the value of my home? What's happening to my retirement nest egg? And what in the world should I get for everyone on my Christmas shopping list?

Indeed, the world places stresses and demands on us all the time, and even as Christians, it can be easy for us to get lost in it. And frankly, all of the things mentioned above are things that we are quite right to be concerned about. Nevertheless, in today's Scripture from Luke, Jesus reminds us that while the world does demand certain things and we should faithfully produce those things, as Christians, God demands something even greater from us. If we are to truly receive the promises of God in this life, "In God We Trust" must be written not just on our money, but on our hearts.

Prayer: Lord, I pray that in this time of economic uncertainty, we might remember the promises God made to us in Christ. In this time of family gatherings, that we might remember that as His Church, Jesus called us to be the family that brings healing and forgiveness into a broken and hurting world. In this time of gift-giving and receiving, that we might never substitute a box wrapped in string for the most precious and eternal gift that we have received from God through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Brad W. Steeples

Thursday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## How Great Is Our God

Scripture: Psalm 18:1-20

Read these verses and try to imagine what this looks like. Crazy, right? Our God is our rock and Our God is our everything. He is what we should rest our life upon. During this time of year it gets hard for us to focus on God. We are running around to different parties, trying to get the Christmas cards out, trying to get all the right presents, and the list goes on.

During these busy times it is important for us to rest on our rock. Make time for our rock. Realize that God is your everything and he is why we are even celebrating this season.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for being our rock. We are weak and we need you. Thank you Lord.

Jeff Dennis

Friday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## We're God Taught

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 (*The Message*)

*“One final word, friends. We ask you—urge is more like it—that you keep on doing what we told you to do to please God, not in a dogged religious plod, but in a living, spirited dance. You know the guidelines we laid out for you from the Master Jesus. God wants you to live a pure life. Keep yourselves from sexual promiscuity. Learn to appreciate and give dignity to your body, not abusing it, as is so common among those who know nothing of God. Don't run roughshod over the concerns of your brothers and sisters. Their concerns are God's concerns, and he will take care of them. We've warned you about this before. God hasn't invited us into a disorderly, unkempt life but into something holy and beautiful—as beautiful on the inside as the outside. If you disregard this advice, you're not offending your neighbors; you're rejecting God, who is making you a gift of his Holy Spirit. Regarding life together and getting along with each other, you don't need me to tell you what to do. You're God-taught in these matters. Just love one another! You're already good at it; your friends all over the province of Macedonia are the evidence. Keep it up; get better and better at it. Stay calm; mind your own business; do your own job. You've heard all this from us before, but a reminder never hurts. We want you living in a way that will command the respect of outsiders, not lying around sponging off your friends.”*

Throughout my life with Christ, it seems to me that I'm always on the search for a guideline on how to live for Him, what to give Him—a how-to rule book, anything to help me out! He's done so much for me, what is it exactly that I'm supposed to do for Him in return? What does he want from me? He's got every gift already, so He's extremely hard to shop for—what do you give the creator of the world?! I find myself in hilarious hysterics, beads of sweat on my furrowed brow, frantically flipping through my Bible—where do the answers lie? ... Then, my searching eyes stumbled upon this verse in Thessalonians, and I was surprised to find that what God wanted from me was simple: To live a life of love for Him, “not in a dogged religious plod, but in a living, spirited dance!” How beautiful! Life can be so busy, so crazed, that sometimes we make it much more complicated than necessary. “God hasn't invited us into a disorderly, unkempt life but into something holy and beautiful—as beautiful on the inside as the outside.” Relief pours through me as I realize that God just wants my heart. He wants my love, and His peace is what I receive in turn. What an amazing gift! Now I can rest in Him, knowing He just wants ME.

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for loving us, for desiring us. Help us to know your peace in our crazy lives. Help us to know that all you want is US. Thank you so much, Father God, for loving us the way that you do.

Melina Dennis

Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008

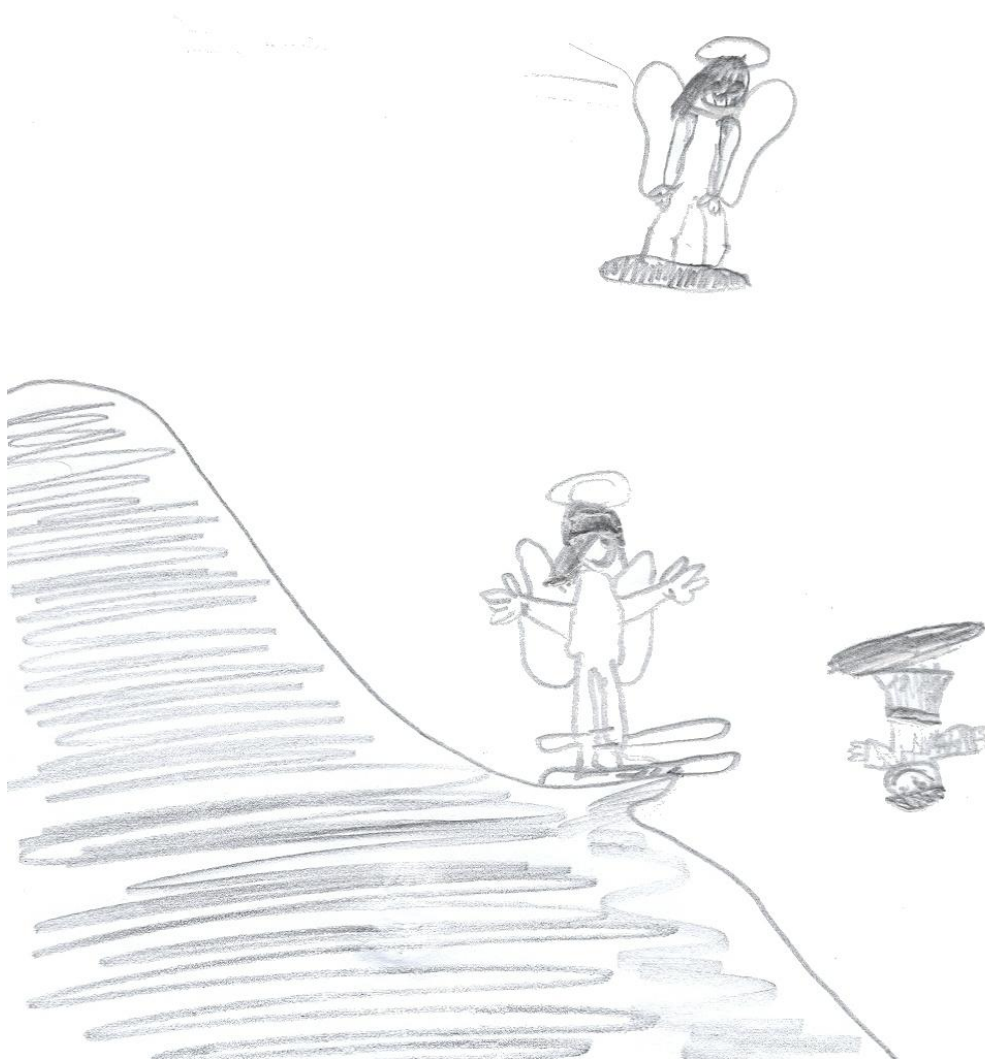
## The Kingdom of God

Scripture: Mark 10:15 – *“I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”*

When Jane and I approached Matthew Fletcher about doing the drawings for this devotional, one of the things he wanted to know was what kind of topics he should use for his drawings. We told him that it was all up to him. We said that for some he could “think outside the box;” to look at things that interest him.

So here you go folks:

### **Angels (some upside down) on skis and snowboards!**



Prayer: “Heavenly Father, guide us to see your Kingdom with new and ever-fresh eyes. With your love and devotion, all things are possible; all things are bright; all things are beautiful.”

Dave Wickert

Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Service for the Second Sunday of Advent (Bethlehem candle)

Light the first Advent candle.

Turn off the lights and light another of the purple candles. As it is being lit say: "I light this candle on the second Sunday in Advent to remind us to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ Child, Jesus."

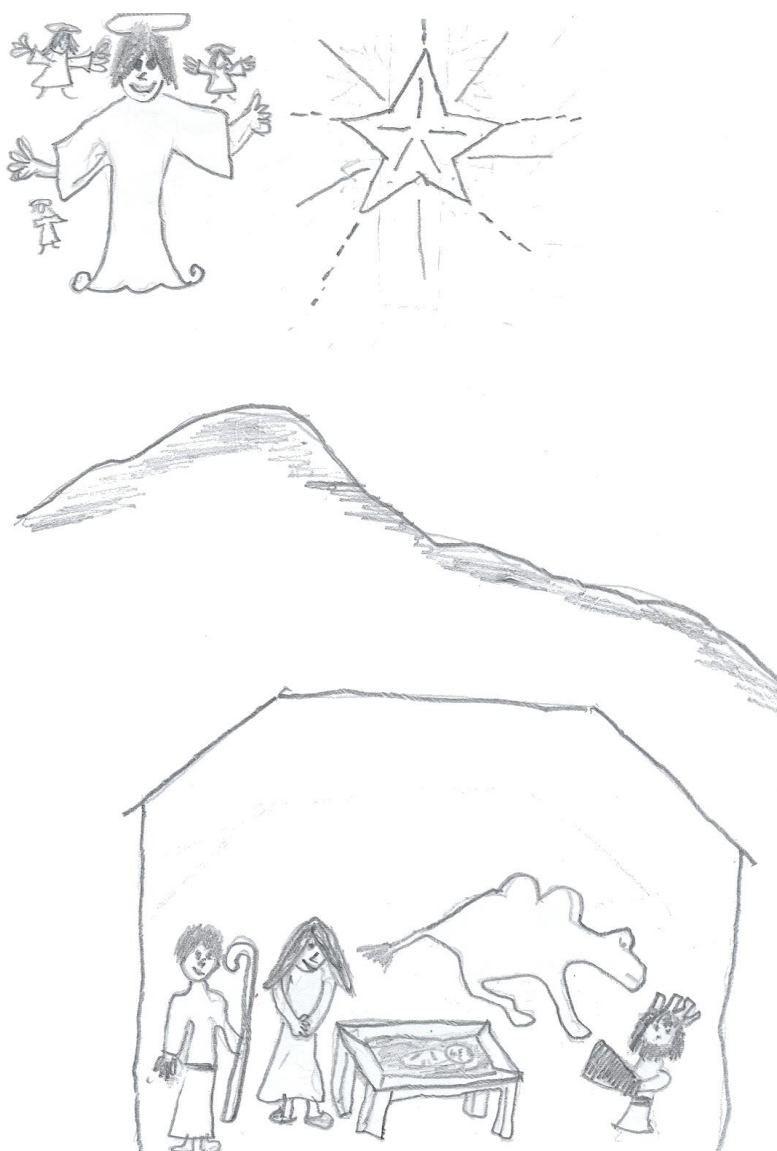
All recite: "Jesus says, I am the light of the world. Those who follow me will have the light of the world and will never walk in darkness."

Read: Luke 1:39-56.

Sing or listen to a song. Suggestions: "O Little Town of Bethlehem," "Away in the Manger," or "Silent Night."

Read Micah 5:2-4.

Close with prayer to thank God that Jesus came into our world so that we could have a restored relationship with God. Help us to love God and each other more.



Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Psalm 148

*Let the earth praise Yahweh...*

*Young men and girls,*

*Old people and children too!*

I was 22; far from home or anything familiar...up on a mesa in Juarez Mexico, not far from the city dump where most of these people used to reside in cardboard "houses" built on top of the heaps of trash. Mesas can be beautiful vistas, but this view - for miles, nothing but gray brown dirt and huts built on top of the dirt. It was all you could see...for miles...no green...just dust and poverty. I felt heavy with this information. I resented having this information...I felt a dread and hopelessness unlike any I had ever felt. How could I or any of us fix this? Why did I have so much just because my little head popped out in America? And what was expected of me for having so much?

I still wrestle with both the image and the question. I believe I'm called to wrestle with it and hope I'm never relieved of the discomfort ....

On this freezing, windy dusty morning...There are 300 of us waiting for mass to begin...outside, in the open, with a simple wooden table for an altar. No seats, just standing on blowing dust.

Short Hispanic men, cloaked in grime, armed with six grossly out of tune guitars, shatter any sense of darkness and oppression:

Demos Gracias al Senor, (We give thanks to God)

Demos Gracias,

Demos Gracias al Senor...

Before I know it, an elderly woman half my height, with three layers of mixed matched dresses pulled over polyester pants, grabs my hand. I'm now moving clockwise in rhythm with the Mariachi music. It is an enormous circle of 300. Out on this dusty Mesa, singing and dancing ...praise unshackling us all from despair...

Por las mananas a saves cantan las alabanzas a Christo el Salvador  
Y tu hermano porque no cantan las alabanzas a Christo el Salvador?  
(In the morning the birds sing praises to Christ and brother why then do you not sing praises to Christ the Savior.)

Nothing but sky, hands, song and praise ...and freedom to worship God unlike any other I've ever experienced

*Let them all praise...Yahweh, for his name and no other is sublime,  
transcending earth in majesty, raising the fortunes of his people,...of Israel,  
the people dear to Him*

Prayer: Lord we await your vision, your justice. In this season of Advent, open our eyes and our hearts to receive You-God with us.

Meg Rich

Monday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Safe in the Arms of Jesus

Scripture: Psalm 9: 9-10

*“The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.”*

“Where’s Ellowyn?” my husband asked. Panicked I scanned the church gym. “There she is,” I point out, “lying on the floor in the middle of the room.” We both smile as we watch our 20 month old roll around on the floor oblivious to those around her. Can this be the same child that only a month ago would start to cry as we would pull into the church drive, afraid of being left in the nursery?

I am in awe as I stand there watching my child. She is so secure in her world she no longer has to cling to me crying for fear I might leave her. Could it be it was only 6 months ago we brought her home from China to a new world filled with strange people, unfamiliar sights, sounds and smells? I think about those first few months and the terror that was in her eyes as she clung to me and screamed if it even looked like I might leave her. Slowly though, over time she came to trust and believe in me. “I will never leave you,” I would tell her each night as I rocked her. “This mommy comes back” I sang and still sing over and over to reassure her. There were baby steps at first as she started to trust in me, then over time she became more relaxed with my coming and going. Now, here she is rolling around in the middle of the church gym without a care in the world.

As I ponder Ellowyn's progress I can't help but think about how easy it would be for me to retreat into fear. I look at our world and it seems to be falling apart. Banks are failing, people are losing homes and jobs, wars breaking out all over the world, and inflation makes it harder to make ends meet. How easy it would be for me to panic and live in fear. The key I have found is to follow my daughter's example. I must stay close to the only true source of comfort and security. What have I to fear wrapped in the arms of Jesus?

Prayer: Dear God, please fill our hearts with your peace during these uncertain times. Help us to see you are not the God of fear, but of love, hope and security. During this season help us to keep our focus on you and the wonderful gift of your son. You are our stronghold in times of trouble. Amen

Bethany Williamson

Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## What Should I Give This Year?

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

During Advent, gift giving is on everyone's mind. We may wonder how we will pay for those gifts or find the time to purchase and wrap them. The verses in 1 Thessalonians speak of gift giving: the gifts of our encouragement and time to others. Rich with action verbs, these verses invite us to review our priorities during this busy season.

Shortly after her beloved dog died, an unmarried acquaintance invited me to her house. I feared that the purpose of the visit was to reminisce about her dog and that was quickly confirmed. But as I listened, I realized she had picked me to listen to her because she felt that I would truly understand the depth of her loss. She needed to be encouraged to tell her stories rather than be encouraged to "get over it". We both received a gift that day, she of a listening ear and I of a more compassionate heart.

Prayer: Father, many tasks seem to be expected of us during this season. May we give the unexpected, just as you did. Amen.

Nancy Elmenhurst

Wednesday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Christmas Abroad

Scripture: Revelation 11:15 “*Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.”*”

We’re studying the book of Revelation in the Tuesday morning bible study, and when we came to this verse, I was suddenly caught up in Handel’s *Messiah*. It took me back to the first Christmas after we were married, when we lived in Germany for a year. We joined a university choir while we were there, a good way to meet students and do something we both enjoyed.

You might think we sang *The Messiah* at Christmas, but we actually sang it at Easter. In German. The choir treated it disdainfully as similar to Bach, but inferior. None of the reverence that we accord it in the United States.

For Christmas, we sang Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio*. It became our family tradition to put on a recording of this majestic oratorio the first thing on Christmas morning, to wake the household with kettle drums and trumpets. It always reminds me of that first Christmas in Germany, when we made a Christmas tree of two coat hangers bedecked with greenery, bead necklaces and straw stars we bought at the Christmas market in Nürnberg.

It was particularly cold that 1962-63 winter. We lived in two rooms on the second floor of a farm house in a small village. We heated the kitchen with the coal range, but the bedroom often had frost halfway up the walls as we made a dash to get under the down comforter. The outhouse was cold as well. But that Christmas, our hearts were warm because Christmas had found us, far away from home.

Prayer: Loving God, thank you for the holy child of Bethlehem, that wondrous gift. As the carol says, “where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in”. Grant me the humility to receive you once more. Amen

Karen Cunningham

Thursday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Trust

Scripture: Psalms 37:1-18

My whole relationship began when I was five years old. I remember sitting in the back of my kindergarten classroom laughing with my friend Emily when my teacher came up and asked me if I wanted to accept Jesus as my savior. As a five year old I thought, "Of course!! Eternal life sounds great." That was my whole idea of what it was like to be a Christian for a while. It took me a very long time to understand that Christianity was more than just being a nice person. God promises a life with Him when we trust him and commit our lives to him. It is more than just saying we are Christians. It is living a life for God no matter what.

When I was in tenth grade I switched schools. I had been at a small private school for ten years and was ready for a change. I decided that I wanted to go to Redmond High School. It was a huge switch. I had been going to a school where my class was 45 kids and I was switching to a school where there would be 600 kids in my grade. I had to trust God that everything would work out fine. This is my second year at the school, and I love it.

Prayer: Dear God, please help us to understand that you have control of every aspect of our lives. Please help us to trust in you through everything. Amen.

Jenny Eisenmann

Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Pray Like You Mean It

Scripture: Psalm 31

*“In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness.” Psalm 31:1*

How’s your prayer life? Really. If you are like me or people I talk to, it leaves something to be desired. Not praying regularly, not praying as much as I want (let alone “continuously”), not satisfied with the content of my prayers, feeling disconnected from God ... Sound familiar?

Here is an experiment for you—read Psalm 31—slowly and as a prayer. Stop whenever you like to focus on issues that come to mind. Meditate on it slowly and listen for God’s small voice as you ponder. Read it out loud—not as someone else’s thing, but your own.

The psalms are the prayer book of God’s people. They are honest with God and with our fears, hopes, and failures. Psalm 31 starts with asking God for rescue. In Advent we remember that we worship a God who does rescue—he has already come to free us. Are we ready to let go of our own “security” and grasp his outstretched hand?

Prayer: Dear Father—move me to pray to you from my heart, to trust you with my doubts, my hopes, my all. Thank you for hearing my cry for mercy. Praise be to the Lord! Amen.

Steve Aeschbacher

Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## For God Is With Us

Scripture: Isaiah 8:10 (God is speaking to Israel in judgment)  
*“Devise a plan but it will be thwarted; state a proposal, but it will not stand. For God is with us.”*

This timely section of Old Testament prophecy seems as relevant today as it was over two thousand years ago. God reminds us that we are not really in charge. Our attempts to control and plan must bow down to the One who ultimately holds our fate.

Recently I spoke with a woman who was struggling with the fear that her parents were not “believers.” We talked about her conservative background and how she used to “*preach at her family with condemnation*” which strained their relationships. More recently there was mostly silence between them. She feared their future, yet recognized that she had not modeled God’s gracious love for them in the way she had spoken. I encouraged her to ask forgiveness of them (something she had not done) and to place them in the hands of the God who “showed up” in the grace-filled life, teaching, sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus.

Whatever you fear—family stresses, economic insecurity or the future—know that God, in the person of Jesus born in Bethlehem and through the power of the Holy Spirit, is with us today.

Prayer: Help us to trust in our relationship with You, Dear God, and not in our own ideas and plans. Amen.

Claudia Grauf-Grounds

Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Service for the Third Sunday in Advent (Shepherds candle)

Light the first two candles.

Turn off the lights and light the pink candle. As it is being lit say:  
“I light this candle on the third Sunday in Advent to remind us to  
prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ Child, Jesus.”

All recite: “Jesus says, I am the light of the world. Those who  
follow me will have the light of the world and will never walk in  
darkness.”

Read: Luke 2:1-4.

Sing or listen to a song. Suggestions: “Joy to the World, “ “O  
Come, All Ye Faithful, “ or “While Shepherds Watched their  
Flocks by Night.”

Read Isaiah 11:1-2.

Prayers: Ask God to help you to slow down and appreciate the  
unique things of the Christmas season.



Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## The Best Seat In The House!

Scripture: Psalm 98: 4 -5 *“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music: make music to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing.”*

This psalm issues a call to celebrate with joy the righteous reign of the Lord. These two verses struck a nostalgic chord in my heart for several reasons.

For over 20 years I sang in the choir of our previous church. It was a talented group of music makers all loving the joy of “singing for the Lord” under Bob McGrath’s inspiring direction. As a soprano I sat in the front row facing the congregation, and it was indeed the best seat in the house! Every Sunday at both services we watched the congregation file in, select their seats as we nodded and smiled at friends and neighbors. We found that we could almost take attendance as we noticed empty seats and absent faces and noticed newcomers and visitors.

We sang the Hallelujah Chorus three times on Easter morning, raising the roof! We sang Christmas anthems with happiness, celebrating the Lord’s birthday. We bid goodbye to dear friends as we sang at memorial services. We drew crowds when we gave concerts. It was a wonderful way to serve the Lord and I know that every choir member here at RPC feels the same way.

We left for Sao Paulo, Brasil in 1977 for 2 years and the choir sang “Blessed Be the Tie That Binds” on that last Sunday. It reduced me to tears as I wondered what I could find to replace this in a strange land. I needn’t have worried for the Lord knows our concerns and provides for us. The Fellowship Church, led by a retired Presbyterian pastor, had a small choir in need of singers (especially sopranos). We have wonderful memories of that church filled with “ex pats” from all over the world worshipping together. No matter how large or how small or where a congregation gathers the Lord calls us to celebrate with music and song.

Prayer: Our Lord in Heaven, Along with multitudes we will gather during this holy season to celebrate your gift to us. There can be no Christmas without Christ whose light penetrates our lives in all ways. Hear us as we give thanks with the harmonies of music and song. Amen

Barbara J. Knopf

Monday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## He Supports Our Faith with Goodness

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:1-11

Life isn't always fair, but the love and light of Jesus is always there. I'll call her Marge who had been a member of our youth group, and went to a well known woman's college in Missouri. She was doing fine and making good grades when she got appendicitis and missed finals. The college wouldn't let her take them later and sent her home. That meant that no other college could take her until she waited a year. Her parents were members of our church and felt terrible, as did their daughter.

It just happened that the Lord had a plan for her, and allowed me to be a part of it. A friend of ours from the School of Religion at the University of Iowa had co-founded John F. Kennedy College in Nebraska. I called him and explained what had happened and he said to bring Marge over. So her mother and I, with Marge, made the trip and they were delighted to have her.

Sometime later her mother invited me to go with her to attend a play at the college in which Marge was the star. Marge went on to graduate and later got a Masters degree. Jesus takes care of those who believe and accept his promises.

Prayer: Heavenly father, in this Christmas season, we thank you for sending Jesus to show us the way and teach us of your promises. It is hard to accept some of the corruption in our world, but we know you will help us to know how we can help your children, young and old and in between. We want to be like Jesus and to keep the faith He has given us, to guide us through this life, until we can be home with You. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen

Bertie Glass

Tuesday, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Reminiscing

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:12-21

The author of Second Peter reminds his audience of things that they already know and are following. So it was with my Mother. She did not rail or yell at me or my sisters when we did something wrong or thoughtless. She gently "reminded" us of what we already knew to be the way of acting and talking. Just as 'Peter' in his letter is teaching ways and things to be remembered so Mother taught her children to obey and to do good. Reminding is a wonderful way to review our lives, to reflect on our lives and to live our lives. Patience has its virtues and pays in dividends to our soul and heart. We hear again the old, old story and relive the best we know.

So often admonition or preaching is to the choir but a gentle reminder is food for the soul.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for the story of faith that is the Gospel and for the many reminders we receive daily of the Way. May we also remind others of Jesus' Way by our deeds and words. Amen

Jim Glass

Wednesday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## King or Saviour?

Scripture: Psalm 119:49-72:

*“Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope.  
This is my comfort in my distress that your promise gives me life.”*

*Psalm 119:49-50*

During the recent election season, we heard a great deal about hope. In the past few months with the economy in turmoil and whispers of recession becoming increasingly louder, we have looked for bright spots and snippets of good news to bring us comfort. What the Psalmist tells us is that the word of God is what brings us hope, that it is God’s promise to us that brings us life.

One of those promises from God is that He would send his son, whose birth we await during this Advent season. As I write this in early November, soon after the election, I am struck by how also during this season of Advent, we are awaiting a new President to govern our nation. We are looking to a man to bring us hope and relief from our economic woe and set our country back on the right track.

Perhaps the Jews were experiencing similar feelings of waiting and anticipating, looking for someone to rescue them from Roman oppression, focusing so intently on a political solution that many of them missed the significance of Jesus. As a disciple of Jesus in December of 2008, I find it so easy to put my faith in political leaders to solve all our problems. No world leader, no matter how charismatic or devout, can fulfill the promise God made to us in becoming incarnate.

God sent his son in the form of a human being to show us how to live. As I look over my life, I know that the times I have had seen the hand of God working in my life was when I was closely connected to a Christian community and looking for the sacred in everyday life.

Jesus came to bring life and to bring it abundantly. Christmas is the time every year that we remember and celebrate the life God gave each one of us. Kings and Presidents are temporal – Jesus is everlasting, eternal.

Prayer: O Lord, help us in these times of uncertainty to embrace the hope you bring in your Son. Continually remind us that Jesus is the answer for the world today! Amen.

Anne Oppermann

Thursday, December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Witness

Scripture: John 5: 30-47

She was only four or five at the time, but I remember the evening well. Freshly bathed, in her flannel jammies, Catherine snuggled deep into her covers and waited expectantly for me to come in for her prayers.

“Dear Lord,” she began...and what continued was the kind of sweet child’s prayer I’d come to know, praying for me, her Daddy, her big sister and her new twin baby brothers.

But then, something she said, snapped me to attention.

“God... she said... how was *your* day today? *My* day was really good, was *your* day good too? And from there, she spoke to God as though it was Jesus himself sitting at the foot of her bed instead of me, her mom.

I remember kissing her forehead goodnight and feeling as though I’d just witnessed something very intimate, something I was deeply privileged to experience. Maybe it was the casual, familial way she spoke to God that got to me, or maybe it was that my own prayers had become so much more formal. But, if I’m honest, what struck me most was that it had been a very long time since I’d simply stopped to *chat* with the Lord, not to mention pausing long enough to even wonder what pains and joys *God* had experienced that day.

Somehow as an adult, I realized that I had grown to think that my “God” moments were moments when I thought I’d left the everyday-ness of my life behind long enough to find Him somewhere else. But in that simple conversation I witnessed, I realized that God isn’t somewhere “out there” that I can go find. God is here, in the now-ness and nitty-gritty of life, and in the very middle of the pains and joys we experience.

“How was your day today Lord? I hope it was as good as mine.”

*“God is at home. It is we who have gone out for a walk.”-Meister Eckhart*

Prayer: “How was your day today Lord? I hope it was as good as mine.”...

Sue Daley

Friday, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## What, Me Worry?

Scripture: Psalm 40

Losing a job is a frightening thing, right? Losing a job when you've just bought a house, a new vehicle, and are expecting twins within a few months is even worse, right? That was the situation I faced shortly after my wife and I moved to the Seattle area. I didn't have a support group I could fall back on, and I can't honestly say I was ready to "put things in God's hands," and yet I felt somehow relieved. My job situation had been as stressful as any I'd experienced, and the company I worked for was in dire straights. I took my layoff as a blessing in disguise. Thankfully, my wife Kris saw it the same way and encouraged me to take some time to relax before launching in to my job search. We had scheduled a week at the ocean before the layoff, and we decided to go ahead and spend the time together. That week was absolutely wonderful: I had time to spend with my family and didn't have a life-draining job waiting for me when I returned. Thankfully, shortly after we got back into town, I interviewed for and was offered a position in a company that I've enjoyed working for ever since. The experience reminds me of Psalm 40, verse 5:

*"Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders you have done.  
The things you planned for us no one can recount to you;  
Were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare"*

In these difficult times, I try to remember these words and focus on the wonderful things that God has provided and the even more wonderful things to come.

Prayer: Remind me, Lord, that I am not in control of my life. Help me to follow you in whatever direction you may lead. In Jesus' name, amen.

Steve McGaw

Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## To Keep From Falling

Scripture: Jude 17-25 *“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.”* Jude 20-21

Do you ever waiver? Let yourself wallow in doubt? Wonder if that shining star you are following is a wandering star? I do. And during those times when I cannot hear God’s voice, I find it easy to take over and charge ahead. I am thankful that I have family and friends who walk this journey of faith with me. People who love me enough to remind me to stop, to pray, to seek the strength of the Holy Spirit, and center myself in the love of God. On my own, I will stumble. I may even fall. There is one who will keep me from falling and it is in His presence that I will find my balance.

Prayer: Today I invite you to stand squarely in the love of God and to pray the closing words from Jude, verses 24-25; *“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 Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen”*

Juliann Phillips

Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008

## Service for the Fourth Sunday in Advent (Angel's candle)

Light the first three candles.

Turn off the lights and light the last purple candle. As it is being lit say: "I light this candle on the fourth Sunday in Advent to remind us to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ Child, Jesus."

All recite: "Jesus says, I am the light of the world. Those who follow me will have the light of the world and will never walk in darkness."

Read: Luke 2:15-20.

Sing or listen to a song. Suggestions: "What Child is This?", "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," or "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear."

Read (optional with young children) Psalm 72:2-14.

Prayer: Thank God for loving us so much. Ask God to help you praise like the shepherds did.



Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008

## Why Do You Give Gifts?

Scripture: John 3:16-21: *“For God so love the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” John 3:16*

Christmas is the season for giving gifts, and we certainly look forward to receiving them! When I was little I would look at the boxes under the tree and wonder what was in each one. I really looked forward to the day I could open all those boxes! And they were for me! As I grew up, I understood more fully that my friends and family gave me gifts because they loved me. Often we associate the value of the gift with the depth of the love the giver of the gift has for us, that is, if we receive an expensive gift we realize that this person must have spent a lot of his hard-earned money for *me* because he wanted to make me happy and show that he loved me very much.

During the season of Advent, we anticipate and celebrate the greatest gift that has ever been given to humanity: Jesus Christ, the only Son of God. Bruce Milne has said it best: “If the depth of love is measured by the value of its gift, then God’s love could not be greater, for his love-gift is his most precious possession—his only, eternally beloved Son.”

Prayer: Father, we look forward to the coming of this magnificent gift, your precious Son, Jesus Christ. Open our hearts that we might fully receive him. Amen.

Nancy Anderson

Monday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008

## Living For God

Scripture: Matthew 3:1-12

This summer changed my relationship with God in ways I cannot begin to explain. In March I had signed up for the trip to Vancouver and was really excited to experience my mission trip. It didn't occur to me until we got to our site in Vancouver that maybe God wanted me to go on this trip for something bigger than me.

Our first day of work frightened me out of my mind. I had pictured my first mission trip being building a house or working at a Vacation Bible School. I had never imagined that I would be in the middle of a soup kitchen in downtown Vancouver making friends with the homeless. To be honest, my first reaction was to call my mom and ask to go home. I was sure that God had made a mistake sending me here. I just kept thinking to myself, "There is no way I can do this. How am I ever going to relate my suburban Woodinville life to these people's lives?"

Then it started to hit me as I looked out at all of the smiling humble faces who were so grateful to get a hot meal and sit in a warm room. I realized maybe God is trying to show me that life isn't about how much money a person has, the nice clothes they own, or the fancy high paying job they're in. God gave us all the opportunity to live for him and prove that we trust him.

That one week shaped how I live my life now. It's not about doing what you think will make you happy or more successful, it's about living for God 100 percent. Like it says in Mathew 3:7, "It's your life that must change, not your skin!" God made us to spread his word to the world, now it's our turn to live for Him and live out His legacy.

Prayer: Thanks be to God!

Becca Ducharme

Tuesday, December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2008

## Walking While Seeing

Scripture: Isaiah 11: 10-16

Isaiah 11: 10-16 reminds us that today, just as in ancient times, God pulls *all* of His people together. Throughout Biblical and modern histories it is no secret that divisive bands – even forgotten bands – have each struggled in the face of one single need: Coming together in the most common of settings to recognize God. These conflicting groups can be interpreted as our varied cultures and ethnicities, our religions and political factions, and even in our groups known simplistically as the haves and have-nots. God fulfills our need for Him as he commands the paths that have once been divisive. “The Lord will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea; with a scorching wind he will sweep his hand over the Euphrates River. He will break it up into seven streams so that men can cross over in sandals.” (Isa. 11: 15)

In God’s ever-presence, Christians are asked to recognize Him. Scripture tells us that we will have God’s guidance, that He will command paths that were only divisions before. But it is up to us to walk through life with eyes wide open. In Og Mandino’s story, *The Greatest Miracle in the World*, the reader is reminded that God commits no miracle without doing so through man. We must walk with seeing, hopeful eyes, looking for God’s works through our fellow man. I believe we are asked to tease through the mundane, the misconceived judgments, and the other trappings that distract – and oh, how they distract. What are God’s communications to us? What limiting perceptions prevent us from seeing the paths of God’s plan? And finally, can we ourselves become one of the small streams allowing our fellow man to “cross over” to Him?

So, God in mainstream movies? God disguised as my adversary? God working within me to benefit another? God working in the economic crisis – *really?!*

Yes, really.

But are my eyes wide open?

Prayer: Dear Lord, let me recognize your way through the fog and the haze of regular life. Let me truly see, and be yours in every way you will work in me. Amen.

Kevin/Jill Mayer

Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## The Normandy of God

Scripture: Isaiah 35:4 and Phil. 2:6-7

*Say to those who are of 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."* Isaiah 35:4

*(Jesus) did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,  
but he emptied himself...  
being born in human likeness.* Phil. 2:6-7

During a pastoral visit with a member of our congregation, I was amazed to learn that he drove a Navy boat full of U.S. soldiers onto "Omaha" beach, Normandy on D-Day June 6, 1944. That's when the Allied forces made the historic invasion of France in order to defeat Hitler's Third Reich during WWII. A realistic representation of this daring beachhead was depicted in Steven Spielberg's movie, "Saving Private Ryan." The actual Allied advance was made in the face of an unbelievable barrage of enemy bullets.

The Christmas story itself is about the bold beachhead of God into the hate-filled territory called earth. The birth of the Messiah was the beginning of God's heroic act to save us. Let's face it, our common humanity in its sin-sick state is the enemy of God. We are shrouded in darkness. Nothing short of a miracle can liberate us.

It's almost Christmas. Can you see the approaching beachhead of our salvation? The Lord himself comes to save us!

Prayer: The light we've been waiting for is now very close. Come Lord Jesus. Come into our world, come into our hearts. Save us. Amen.

Larry Grounds

Thursday, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008

## Nothing Is Impossible

Scripture Luke 1:26-38

My favorite verse in this passage is verse 37: "For with God nothing will be impossible."

Think of the incredible series of events that has brought you to where you are today. Your relatives of generations long past, somehow met in far away places and set in motion circumstances which ultimately resulted in your birth. The same thing happened to everyone around you and somehow we've all converged at this time and place, reflecting on the birth of a child 2000 years ago in a small village stable. Impossible?

Do we know the favor of the Lord? God gifts his grace on all who believe in him. He shows his favor to the lowly, to those who are humble and receptive to his word.

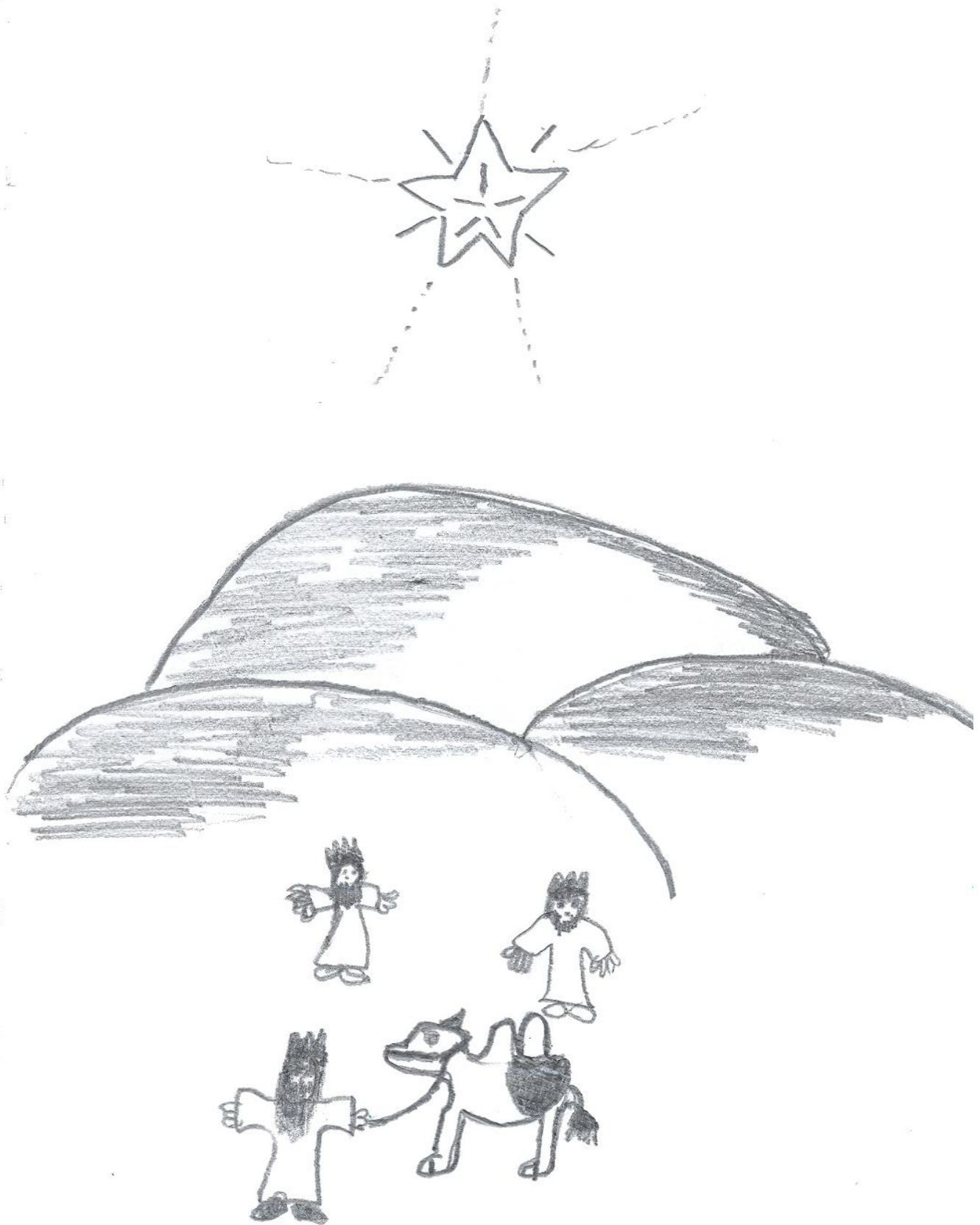
How does Mary respond to the word of God delivered by the angel Gabriel? She knows she is hearing something that will surely take a miracle which surpasses all that God has done previously. She was full of grace because she trusted that what God said was true and would be fulfilled. She was willing and eager to do God's will, even if it seemed difficult or costly. When God commands, He also gives the help, strength, and trust to respond. We can either yield to His grace or resist and go our own way. Do we believe in God's promises and trust in His ability to work the impossible?

Every day, I'm continually amazed at the power of a 3 minute song to raise me from whatever I'm depressed about into a heightened state of God's promise.

Thousands of years of someone else's history resulting in them writing a 3 minute song that blessed me! Impossible?

Prayer: "Heavenly Father, you offer us abundant life, grace, and forgiveness through your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Help us to live as Mary did by believing in your promises and continually strengthening our faith through the "impossible" gifts you give us every single day."

Bill Phillips



## The Three Wise Men

[Matthew 2:1] After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."



## Advent Events at RPC

Nov. 29<sup>th</sup> – *Decorate the Sanctuary for Advent*, 10:00AM

Help decorate the church for Advent. Refreshments will be served.

Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> – *All-Church Christmas Open House*, 2:00-5:00PM

17940 NE 22<sup>nd</sup> Way, Redmond, 98052

An informal gathering at the home of our pastor's family. Hot cider and shared refreshments.

Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> – *Redmond Lights Celebration*, 4:00PM City Hall

Volunteer to serve hot cocoa or cider, work in the children's craft area or sing in the ecumenical choir.

Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> – *KeenAgers Christmas Lunch*, 11:30AM

Emerald Heights in the Emerald Room.

Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> – *Christmas Songfest*, 3:00PM Sanctuary

Children's Pageant, Youth, Praise Team, RPC Choir, the singing of carols. Refreshments to follow in the Upper Room.

Dec. 16<sup>th</sup> – *Ascent Christmas Party*, 7:00PM in Upper Room

(7-8 grades)

Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> – *The Hall Christmas Party*, 7:00PM in FH

(9-12 grades)

Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> – *Candlelight Christmas Eve Services*

5:00PM – Worship Service with Bill Phillips and the Praise Team

7:00PM – Worship Service with RPC Choir

(Childcare, children's story and carol singing at both services.)

Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> – *One Worship Service* 10:00AM