

HOPE

PEACE

JOY

LOVE

*Advent
Reflections*

2018

Darla created this very simple design as a stained glass window. You may add more details and color in the window. Bright and bold or pastel and soft, whatever you prefer. This is your creation. Enjoy!

Week 1 Therefore I have Hope.

Week 2 Peace I leave with you.

Week 3 Open your eyes to the Joy around you.

Week 4 Love the Lord your God.

May the Star of Wonder guide you through the weeks of Advent.

*Cover design by
Darla Budden, Presentation Associate*

Preparation

Why is the universe in such disarray?
No wonder the world will ever be swayed.
Nations are shouting.
People have roared!

Come prepare the way of the Lord!

The government is full of corruption.
Hold on! Time for an interruption.
Just think of those who offer assistance.
How quickly you find such persistence.
People shouting all over abroad:

Come prepare the way of the Lord!

How quickly we find the Spirit in each other.
So joyous when the merit is found in our brother.
To look at one another and find the One we have adored.

Come prepare the way of the Lord!

Oh sister, sister, shine a light.
To the hills I shall take flight.
I will fly like a bird
Awaiting His word.

Come prepare the way of the Lord!

*Poem written by
Rachel Evans, Presentation Associate*

First Sunday of Advent December 2, 2018

“May the Lord be generous in increasing your love and make you love one another and the whole human race as much as we love you.” 1 Thessalonians 3:12

Here we are, at the start of a new liturgical year. These weeks are advertised as the “season of giving”. We are urged to show our love through tangible gifts.

St. Paul encouraged the church in Thessalonika to love each other and indeed the whole human race. Who has a heart this big? Who can possibly comprehend this kind of loving?

Well, Christ does. The one whose birth we celebrate laid out before us a pattern of loving and says to us each day, “go for it”. Stretch your heart to include more of the family.

God of all, you are generous with love beyond belief. If I am able at all to recognize, include, embrace and love others, it is because you are loving me. You know my name. That means everything to me. Amen

Colleen Vlasisavljevich, Presentation Associate

Jeremiah 33:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2
Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

**Monday
December 3, 2018**

**“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, God will teach us the way, so that we may walk in the way of peace.”
Isaiah 2:3**

Isaiah gives us a glimpse of the house of God, a place of peace – where swords become plowshares and spears pruning hooks. We have made a commitment to non-violence in mind and heart, speech and action. We may think this is impossible in the world today, yet it must begin with us. Thich Nhat Hanh says, “Practicing peace is possible with every step, with every breath. It is possible for us to practice together and bring hope and compassion into our daily lives and into the lives of our families, our community, our nation, our world.”

**How can I/we practice non-violence during this Advent season?
How will our mind, heart, speech and action be peace filled?
May we bring hope and compassion into our lives and to those around us as we make space for Christ this Advent.**

Sister Marilyn Breen

Isaiah 2:1-5; Matthew 8:5-11

Tuesday
December 4, 2018

Luke tells us that when Zechariah was approached by the Angel as he worked in the Temple, the Angel had a message for him. It was a joyous message: you shall have a son. This son will be a joy and filled with the Spirit of God. In fact this son would be like Elijah and he will bring people back to the right path of virtue and wisdom, all most pleasing to God, a Christmas message indeed!

What was Zechariah's response: HOW CAN I BE SURE OF THIS?

Looking for certainty! Will we spend our lives like this? Will we shun the unknown because "we can't be sure?" God is unknown. The future is unknown. The Angel describes outstanding virtues of this son. Wouldn't it be appropriate to gather up all these known things and decide the risk would be worth it?

Isaiah reminds us that God doesn't judge by appearances and hearsay. There is no fake news with God, but only integrity. Isaiah reminds us with poetry: the shoot from Jesse will have wisdom, insight, counsel, power, knowledge and fear. These words are beautiful and beyond poetry. They have the strength to remind us that the wolf can lie down with the lamb and the panther with the kid. Further, Isaiah reminds us that even the baby can play in the cobra's hole and handle the snake. All of this is possible because the shadow of God covers them, and holds them in God's embrace. As water swells the sea so God guards God's own.

Can I be a little brave next time and take a risk? Can I befriend Zechariah and the Angel and keep them as guides by my side? Can I remember God's shadow enfolds me?

Sister Virgie Luchsinger, SFCC, Presentation Associate

Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 10:21-24

Wednesday
December 5, 2018

“On this mountain the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines.” Isaiah 25:6

Both readings take place on mountains. Mountains have been the closest point between heaven and earth for many cultures and peoples. They are designated as holy places, and sacred buildings are often located there. On the mountain, one can see the wider picture and have a different perspective. People retreat to the mountains to clear their minds and to be more fully conscious of reality. This is the place chosen for the messianic banquet in Isaiah where all peoples are welcome and for Jesus' compassionate outreach of healing and feeding the multitude. Likewise, our mountain experiences need to open us to the wider view and stretch our compassion to more people to bring God's world into clearer focus.

God, as we strive to be more radically hospitable in the world, let us learn from your examples on the mountain tops and practice them.

Sister Rita Menart

Isaiah 25:6-10; Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday
December 6, 2018

“And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool ...” Matthew 7:26

Presentation people are people of action! The Nagle coat of arms motto – Not words, but deeds – describes Nano in just four words. She left few documents, but her accomplishments reverberate around the world today.

In today’s milieu of senseless violence and systemic injustice, we may occasionally fall victim to the darkness of hopelessness. Psychology teaches that merely making the decision to take action can change one’s mood.

Following Jesus in the pattern of Nano, we listen and then act.

What action can I take today to resist the injustice that diminishes dignity?

Billie Greenwood, Presentation Associate

Isaiah 26:1-6; Matthew 7:21, 24-27

**Friday
December 7, 2018**

“... Lebanon shall be changed into an orchard ... On that day the deaf shall hear ... the blind shall see” Isaiah 29:24

“Are you confident I can do this? ... Because of your faith it shall be done to you.” Matthew 9:29-30

Both readings speak of answer to prayers granted because of faithfulness to the call of God. The prophet Isaiah explains God's plan of redemption for the people of Israel. Jesus gives sight to the two blind men and reminds them that it's because of their faith in God.

How often do I ask God for favors or answers to prayer for myself or for others? Is my prayer offered with confidence in God's love for me and others in our needs?

Sister Dolores Zieser

Isaiah 29:17-24; Matthew 9:27-31

Feast of the Immaculate Conception
Saturday, December 8, 2018

“In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, ‘Hail, favored one: the Lord is with you.’ But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ But Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?’ And the angel said to her in reply, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.’ ... Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her.” Luke 1:26-35, 38

These familiar words are Mary’s “yes” to God. Mary trusted that no matter what the mysterious future would bring, she was willing to walk the path, to go as Nano did, to go “one pace beyond.” The future of today’s world is also a mystery, indeed, a little scary. But we, like Mary and Nano, need to be ready to trust that the world is in God’s hands. We, too, say “Yes.”

Yes, Lord, I am your servant. May it be done to me according to your word.

Janet Leonard, Presentation Associate

Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38

**Second Sunday of Advent
December 9, 2018**

“A voice crying aloud in the wilderness, ‘Prepare a way for the Lord; clear a straight path for him. Every ravine shall be filled in, and every mountain and hill leveled ...’” Luke 3:4-5a

John’s voice that cries out in the desert is the voice of a soul who loves greatly, one who has indeed been allured by this God in love with us, a soul so inflamed that he will not keep quiet and can only shout out his message. He denounces the injustices around him and manifests a God whose passion for humanity is never ending. John does not attend to or fear what others might think or say, shows no concern for the values of a consumerist society.

Am I conscious of how much I/we are loved by God, even amidst an impossibly tumultuous partisan climate of falsehood and deceit? Is my love strong enough so that I can assert God’s presence and truth to myself and to others? Do my efforts in regard to justice manifest the love and nonviolence of Gandhi and Martin Luther King?

Sister Maura McCarthy

Baruch 5:1-9; Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11; Luke 3:1-6

**Monday
December 10, 2018**

“And some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed; they were trying to bring him in and set him in his presence.” Luke 5:18

I've never been physically paralyzed, as was the man in today's Gospel, but I have experienced the paralyzing lack of freedom that has accompanied some of the choices I've made out of fear or a perspective of scarcity. Somehow the paralytic's friends knew that what he needed to be free was to be in the presence of Jesus and his abundant love and mercy – as do we.

Merciful God, we are grateful for the gift of all who, through their wisdom, guidance and example, invite us into your presence. There, as we wait in silence, heal our paralyzing fears and perceptions. Grace us with ever-deeper awareness of your abundant love and mercy. It is enough!

Carol Witry, Presentation Associate

Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 5:17-26

**Tuesday
December 11, 2018**

“It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.” Matthew 18:14

Jesus' message to each of us is that life is very precious. Everyone we encounter is valuable and irreplaceable. The “little ones” include the people the world does not rate as important: the homeless, the immigrant, the diseased, the uneducated, etc. It is easy to ignore these “little ones” or pretend they don't exist. Jesus' thoughts turn conventional attitudes upside down.

Do I believe in the value of one?

What if each person helped even one person at a time?

Might the world be changed?

To what “little one” can I reach out today?

What message do my attitude and my actions reflect?

Sister Rita Cameron

Isaiah 40:1-11; Matthew 18:12-14

**Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
Wednesday, December 12, 2018**

“There is nothing God cannot do.” Luke 1:37

Upon hearing the call to bear this child for our world, Mary first was worried and fearful, not knowing how this could change her life and that of others.

We commit to radical hospitality today when our lives and world challenge us to take part and make things better for others. Sure, we go through fears and doubts. This seems to naturally be the first stage before plunging into action. It moves us into trust in the Spirit and the promised, “There is nothing that God cannot do.”

Can I move into everyday calls-to-action in small and large ways with confidence in the Spirit and the companionship of our Nano community? Does fear get too much power? What gives me the omph to go ahead and act radically?

Carol Kane, Presentation Associate

Zechariah 2:14-17; Luke 1:26-38

Thursday
December 13, 2018

“For I am the Lord, your God, who grasp your right hand; it is I who say to you, ‘Do not fear, I will help you.’” Isaiah 41:13

The first line of scripture is a reminder to us of God’s ever-present help and faithfulness, God’s hesed. Isaiah continues in the next line by describing Jacob as a worm and Israel as a maggot. This appears to be an oxymoron, first reassurance, then a calling out of Jacob and Israel’s faults. The beauty of this reading, however, is that it is a reminder of God’s hesed for Israel as well as for us, even with all our weaknesses, failings, and struggles. God repeatedly shows hesed to the Israelites by naming the ways that God will bless and never abandon them. These promises remain true in our today. No matter how grim humanity seems to have become, God’s hesed is ever-present. We need to accept God’s hesed and share it with the rest of the world.

In what ways do we see God’s hesed expressed in our lives today? Who do I need to show hesed to in my own life?

Sister Mary Therese Krueger

Isaiah 41:13-20; Matthew 11:11-15

Friday
December 14, 2018

“Soon your descendants will come back, and all who are trying to destroy you will go away.” Isaiah 49:17

Isaiah brings hope to the world with these words: God does care, love and will have mercy upon all the afflicted. All the people leaving their homes looking for a new life, looking for their individual restoration, or families' restoration, or even of an entire people, will find God's healing work moves outward, always expanding toward, always caring and loving.

It is time for us to receive God's people with love, welcoming all of them making them our “descendants” in God, for the restoration of human kind.

God, fill my heart with the healing love to receive all your “descendants” with compassion and unconditional love. “Jesus spoke to the crowds, ‘But to what will I compare this generation?’” Matthew 11:16

Contemporary politics has made us very familiar indeed with the game of reducing complex issues to ideals and superficiality, picking a side and yelling at one another. The world has a long history of division over ideals and doctrines that make us forget that God's call is about discerning, loving, caring for each another and accepting our differences and similitudes.

It's always going to be “this generation.” They may be children or strangers or people who are not sure whether or how they fit. They may be poets or artists who are focused to look at the world differently. Whoever they might be in any given generation, they will always be people who see what others do not, the generation ready to help the rest of us deal with our blinding arrogance and entitlement. They may be people whose lives challenge the ideals over which we argue and divide. It is time for “this generation” to make the difference, turn around and become God's generation!

God, help us to be the generation of love, compassion, welcoming.

Dora Serna, Presentation Associate

Isaiah 49:17-19; Matthew 11:16-19

Saturday
December 15, 2018

“Elijah is indeed coming, and he will restore everything. I assure you, though, that Elijah has already come, but they did not recognize him and they did as they pleased with him.” Matthew 17:12-13

Both readings from today’s liturgy speak of Elijah. This caused me to wonder just who Elijah was and why he was important enough to be in both Advent readings. Are you ready for a quick study from a biblical commentary? I learned that Elijah was a ninth century prophet. Stories about Elijah are full of wonders and miraculous acts. When his life came to an end he was gathered up to heaven in a whirlwind. His powerful personality made an unforgettable impact on his own (and later) generations. So his death and ascent to heaven in a fiery chariot gave him a role in Jewish traditions about the End of Times. Elijah also merited the role in Jewish tradition as the Herald of the Messiah. In the New Testament many identified John the Baptist with Elijah, Forerunner of the Messiah. Some thought Jesus to be Elijah but Jesus rejected this and attributed the role to John the Baptist.

Are my questions answered? No, but now it is easier for me to see Elijah’s place in this time of preparation for the coming of the Messiah, knowing that the title of “Forerunner” still belongs to John the Baptist. The important message remains: we are to continue to use this waiting period to prepare for Jesus to be born in our hearts.

What am I doing to make this happen?

Sister Anne McCormick

Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11; Matthew 17:10-13

**Third Sunday of Advent
December 16, 2018**

“The Lord has removed judgment against you; he has turned away your enemies.” Zephaniah 3:15

“The Lord is in your midst, you have no further misfortune to fear.” Philippians 4:5-6

Advent is the season to pause from all the activities and take time to reflect. It is to be a time of anticipation, joy, and peace, a time to resolve your concerns and troubles in prayer.

**How has the Lord turned away your enemies?
Do you fear misfortune? Do you recognize the Lord in your day to day activities and struggles? Share with another.**

Charlotte McCoy, Presentation Associate

Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 3:10-18

Monday
December 17, 2018

“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ ...” Matthew 1:1

I have never been one to be very interested in family trees and genealogical study until after both of my parents had died, and I realized that our family had lost some of the names and stories of our grandparents, great grandparents and their extended families. This loss raised my awareness of the importance of maintaining family connections and the sense of belonging these relationships and the stories provide.

Now I better understand the gospel writer situating Jesus in the Jewish tradition for his Hebrew Christian audience. Liturgically this gospel reading comes near the end of Advent just days before we hear and celebrate the story of Jesus' birth. We are reminded of Jesus roots in our human story and our human roots in God's story.

Loving God, thank you for the gifts of connection and belonging that we find in family and community. Help us to be present to those who are without family or support during the holidays. May they experience your love through us. Amen.

Sister Annette Kestel

Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Matthew 1:1-17

Tuesday
December 18, 2018

“ ... when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream ...” Matthew 1:20

Dreams fascinate me. Reverend Robert Haden calls dreams unopened letters from God. I have kept a dream journal since 2007. Here are some of the things God has revealed to me in my dreams. When I dream about school, I am in a transition in my life. When I dream about water, especially a river, I am dealing with an emotional issue. If I'm driving on an icy road in my dream, my life is a bit out of control. And I met my guardian angel "Sasquatch" in a dream. That's not his real name; he prefers anonymity like the angel who comes to Joseph and like most of the other angels in Scripture. How fortunate for humankind that Joseph listened to his dream messenger!

During your prayer time today, ponder a recent or not so recent dream. What might God be calling you to realize?

Bernie Graves, Presentation Associate

Jeremiah 23:5-8; Matthew 1:18-25

Wednesday
December 19, 2018

“Zechariah said to the angel, ‘How shall I know this?’”

Luke 1:18

Why? How can this be? Are you serious? We ask questions like these many times in any given day especially as we face surprises and challenges.

We don't know why Zechariah questioned. Zechariah was a righteous and prayerful man. Maybe he was so surprised he couldn't think straight. Perhaps, after so many years of begging for a son and receiving a “no” he was skeptical in order to protect himself from disappointment.

Questions, wonderings, doubts and anxieties are normal. Sometimes the questions might come because of challenges, even injustices. One of the questions this gospel gives us is: How do we cling to hope and to the promises of God in difficult times?

As you walk through the hours of this day, carry a pad of paper/ pen with you. Each time you ask a question, write it down. At the end of this day, prayerfully reflect on your questions. In a spirit of prayer, place these questions into the loving hands of a loving God.

Sister Cheryl Demmer

Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a; Luke 1:5-25

**Thursday
December 20, 2018**

“Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God’ ... Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.’” Luke 1:30, 38

Associates have such marvelous witnesses of women living their lives out as handmaids of God in the Presentation Sisters. Your whole lives have been living the Gospel message. Your faith and action gives others courage. – “May it be done to me according to your will.”

My prayer is that I find the strength from your example to live as a true associate of the Presentation community.

Deb Jasper, Presentation Associate

Isaiah 7:10-14; Luke 1:26-38

Friday
December 21, 2018

**“O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.”
Malachi 3:20; Isaiah 9:1; Psalm 107:14**

Today is the first day of the season of winter in the Northern Hemisphere - the shortest day of the year. While we experience the lack of sunlight during the day, we look to the night sky for the full moon's light which happens tomorrow. Today's O Antiphon reminds us that the physical lights of Earth's cycles are nothing compared with the eternal light, the sun of justice which brings the splendor of God's radiant dawn to our hearts if we but allow ourselves to be open to receiving this Light.

Both the first reading and the gospel guide us in our response to the Light. The Song of Song's commands us to "arise and come." The gospel tells us of Mary traveling to assist her cousin Elizabeth. In the way of Mary we are to become reflections of the Radiant Dawn by going forth to bring light to those who dwell in darkness wherever they might be in our "winter world."

To whom will you offer the radiant light of radical hospitality today?

Sister Joy Peterson

Song of Songs 2:8-14; Luke 1:39-45

Saturday
December 22, 2018

“For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.” Luke 1:48-49

Mary made room for God. This passage highlights that she did more than just purely obey. She embraced His will, which is something that can be hard. Here, Mary shows extreme joy and thankfulness in adhering to God’s glorious plan. What if we had her mindset? What if we happily made room for God instead of grudgingly? Let us embrace her beautiful words and live out our lives praising Him. I encourage you to listen to different versions of “The Magnificat” and reflect on Mary’s own powerful words.

P.S. As Christmas rolls around, I also recommend a beautiful song about making room for God’s plan, “Make Room” by Casting Crowns. God bless and happy Advent!

Lord, let me express praise and joy for how you have set me apart and been my life. Let me make room for you.

Cady Windish, Presentation Associate

1 Samuel 1:24-28; Luke 1:46-56

**Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 23, 2018**

“Elizabeth’s baby stirred in her womb for joy ... Mary, blessed is the fruit of your womb.” Luke 1:39-45

John O’Donohue writes in *To Bless the Space Between Us*, page 56

“For A Mother-To-Be”

Nothing could have prepared your heart to open like this.

Like some primeval moon, your soul brightens

The tides of essence that flow to your child.

You know your life has changed forever,

For in all the days and years to come,

Distance will never be able to cut you off

From the One you now carry

For nine months under your heart.

How does my Advent heart carry Jesus to others today?

**To what will I give birth today on my Advent journey ... joy,
peace, re-dedication to God’s will?**

Sister Jennifer Rausch

Micah 5:1-4; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

Monday
December 24, 2018

“In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.” Luke 1:78-79

This evening, we will celebrate the birth of the Radiant Dawn, his cry breaking through the darkness. I yearn for his Light, deep in my marrow. Life's darkness and hardness wears me thin. Yet, amidst the heaviness of life, Jesus, our true Light, keeps vigil, and Dawn approaches gradually, tenderly ... and swiftly. The smallest twinge of daylight breaks forth hope, pink and gold, into a dark heart and soul, guiding me to that Light, Love, Truth. My eyes must dilate to adjust to this new Daylight. I need clear vision to see others in darkness and to share this Radiant Dawn of hope. God's tender compassion shines. Grace lives.

What darkness or shadow within you needs the breaking through of Christ's light? With whom might you be called to share the light of God's grace?

Anastasia Nicklaus, Presentation Associate

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Luke 1:67-79

Solemnity of Christmas
Tuesday, December 25, 2018

“She (Mary) wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” Luke 2:7 (Midnight)

“So they (shepherds) went in haste and found Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in the manger ... then the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen ...” Luke 2:16, 20 (Dawn)

Mary, Joseph, Jesus: “no room for them,” at least not in that Bethlehem inn! At Jesus’ birth, the world seems far from offering them welcome. Yet, shepherds, among the poor and outcast of that time, hasten to welcome them, and in turn are welcomed!

Having seen and heard, simple shepherds amaze others with good news as they return to their fields with glory and praise to the God whose love and welcome first called them.

How am I touched by the radical hospitality of God’s love and welcome in my life? How welcoming will I be as I side “with them” – the poor, the outcast, the unwanted, the “other”?

Open my ears, my eyes and my heart to hear, to see and to love others anew, welcoming them as You have first loved and welcomed me.

Sister Diana Blong

Midnight: Isaiah 9:1-6; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14
Dawn: Isaiah 62:11-12; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:15-20

Wednesday
December 26, 2018

“Then he fell to his knees and cried out in a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ And when he said this, he fell asleep.” Acts 7:60

If someone speaks against you because of your faith, can you let the Spirit of your Father speak through you? Can you say “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” Or, will you try to argue or debate them on your own? Let God inspire you to let Him do your speaking and grant forgiveness. If others speak about you, do the same whether it is about faith or something else. Forgive them.

Today, be like Stephen and forgive someone. Do it quietly. And do it again if necessary. And maybe, try it again tomorrow.

Gino Pacetti, Presentation Associate

Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59; Matthew 10:17-22

**Thursday
December 27, 2018**

“We are writing this to you to make our own joy complete.”

1 John 1:4

I have been so blest during Advent and now Christmas. I should be full of joy as I reflect God's presence all around. God is with me daily. Can I find him? Do I look for him? When I do, may I bring joy to others by my actions. God has been so generous to me.

Now I have an opportunity to share his gifts with others ... the sick, the poor, whoever God puts in my way. Help me to be generous with others.

Sister Dolores Moes

1 John 1:1-4a; John 20:1a, 2-8

**Friday
December 28, 2018**

“Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod.” Matthew 2:13-15

Every time I hear or read this passage I am awestruck by the faith and trust Joseph demonstrated at this time. First his family is visited by the wise men, then an angel appears and tells him to immediately leave his home with his family and go to an unknown land, for an undetermined amount of time. And he did just as the angel directed him, showing TRUST and FAITH to do the will of God.

Lord, please bless me with the gifts of trust and faith so that I may do your holy will for the good of your Master plan.

Michelle Covey, Presentation Associate

1 John 1:5-2:2; Matthew 2:13-18

Saturday
December 29, 2018

“Lord, now let your servant go in peace; Your word has been fulfilled: my own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people: a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel.” Luke 2:29-32; Gospel Canticle, Night Prayer/Compline

What if we were to reflectively re-read our Christmas cards through the lens of this canticle? Is there good news of salvation from a friend now in remission from cancer ... from a cousin whose son is making steady progress in recovery from drug addiction ... from a young couple who anxiously anticipate the birth of their first child? Do our Christmas messages include glimpses of how family and friends experience the light of Jesus through the loving kindness of friends at the time of an unexpected death ... the joy of being retired and having time to volunteer ... gratitude for God's blessing of good health?

May this practice become a meaningful Christmas tradition!

Sister Beth Driscoll

Grateful to celebrate this 50th Jubilee Year!

1 John 2:3-11; Luke 2:22-35

Feast of the Holy Family Sunday, December 30, 2018

“For this child I prayed; and the Lord has granted me the petition that I made to him.” 1 Samuel 1:27

On this feast celebrating family, the story of Hannah reminds us of the suffering experienced by women who want children but are struggling with infertility. Hannah “prayed to the Lord, and wept bitterly.” (1 Samuel 1:10) Today Eileen shares the story of her tears: “I remember going to a first birthday party for my best friend’s son. My husband and I had been trying to conceive, but had met with no success ... As other one-year-old children filled her backyard, I found myself creeping toward the corner. When the cake was brought out, I looked into my friend’s eyes. They were filled with joy. It was one of the happiest moments of her life, and unfairly, one of my saddest. After quickly sneaking out, I sat in my car and cried my eyes out. I’d never realized the intensity of my pain.” (Marrs, Fertility Book).

Elizabeth Ministry, a Catholic based organization, includes in its work support for women experiencing infertility. Unfortunately, not many parishes have a chapter of this organization or a comparable support group. Today’s scriptural reading about Hannah reminds us of the need for this type of ministry to women.

**Prayer for those seeking to conceive a child:
Mother of Christ, you were graced by God with the privilege of bearing our Divine Savior. You experienced the joys and challenges of being a parent ... With St. Joseph, you created a home for your family to love and share together. Please intercede before the God of all life, that women seeking to have a child (here mention names) may conceive a baby and raise healthy children, with whom they can share the Lord’s good gifts. (lordcalls.com)**

Janine Marie Idziak, Presentation Associate

1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28; 1 John 3:1-2, 21-24
Luke 2:41-52

**Monday
December 31, 2018**

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling place among us, and we have seen his glory; the glory of the Son coming from the Father, filled with enduring love.” John 1:14

Christmas day is over. All the gifts are opened and being used. Does this mean the end of Christmas? What does it mean to us that the “Word became flesh and dwelt among us”? God sent us His only Son to be among us, full of love. He is here to show us how to love others. This has to be the greatest Christmas gift of all!

**Am I going to see the face of Jesus in others?
How am I going to show them His love in return?**

Yvonne Kisch, Presentation Associate

1 John 2:18-21; John 1:1-18

**Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God
Tuesday, January 1, 2019**

“So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in a manger.” Luke 2:16

Wow! What a beautiful day upon which to start a brand new year. The shepherds went in haste to see the new prince of peace, Jesus, who changed the world because Blessed Mary said “yes” to God’s plans. Mary has been called Queen of Peace and this is a World Day of Peace. May we enjoy more peace this year and go in haste to enjoy God’s miracles in our lives.

**“The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord let his face shine upon
you and be gracious to you!
The Lord look upon you kindly
and give you peace.”
Numbers 6:24-26**

Mary Irene Stanton, Presentation Associate

Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21

Advent Contributors



Cover Art

Darla Budden is a member of Nano's Nine associate group and lives in Petersburg, Iowa. She volunteers many hours for her parish at Saints Peter and Paul, the first consecrated church in Iowa. She is the president of the board at La Luz Hispana in Hampton, Iowa.



Advent Poem

Rachel Evans lives in Forest City, Iowa, and works in the water line prep area for Winnebago Industries. She teaches confirmation in Lake Mills, Iowa, and likes to read, watch YouTube videos and swim.



Sunday, December 2

Colleen Vlaisavljevich and her husband Steve are both retired. Colleen enjoys making her own greeting cards, knitting (now, for a first grandchild due in March), cooking good food, writing and gardening. She remains hopeful for good to grow in our world by looking for signs of goodness every day. Family and friends are the most cherished sources of those signs.



Monday, December 3

Sister Marilyn Breen lives in Chicago and ministers as a spiritual companion. She also serves on the leadership team.



Tuesday, December 4

Sister Virgie Luchsinger, SFCC, lives in Chicago, Illinois, and is a trained nurse and theologian. She is always interested in living life at the deepest level and finds great joy in her relationship as a Presentation associate.



Wednesday, December 5

Sister Rita Menart began a five-year term on congregational leadership with the Sisters of the Presentation in June 2018. She also coordinates retreats for the Spanish speakers in the Archdiocese of Dubuque.



Thursday, December 6

Billie Greenwood and her husband, Paul Allen, divide their time between Davenport, Iowa, and Nogales, a city south of Tucson that straddles the U.S.-Mexico border. In Davenport, they work to improve life in the central city (hunger and housing issues), and in Nogales they volunteer at a migrant assistance center.



Friday, December 7

Sister Dolores Zieser is the fifth in a family of 14 children. She spent 40 years ministering as an elementary teacher, art coordinator and high school art teacher and 16 years in pastoral ministry at a senior apartment facility. She lives at Mount Loretto and is still busy working.



Saturday, December 8

Janet Leonard lives in Manchester, Iowa, and is a retired teacher. She is a member of the Illuminaries associate group and the Women, Children and Indigenous Circle. Janet volunteers in her local parish.



Sunday, December 9

Sister Maura McCarthy lives at Mount Loretto and is retired from ministry as a teacher and Bolivian and Hispanic missionary. She enjoys translation and interpretation for Spanish speaking persons, and/or driving and accompanying sisters to their appointments.



Monday, December 10

Carol Witry has ministered in parish faith formation and as co-director of the Presentation Associate Partnership. Now retired, she enjoys reading, walking and spending time with family.



Tuesday, December 11

Sister Rita Cameron is a native of South Dakota. Her ministries have included music teacher, school guidance counselor, campus ministry liturgist, vocation director and Catholic Charities counselor. She is a sister, mother of two and grandmother of five.



Wednesday, December 12

Carol Kane lives in Bloomington, Minnesota. She retired from teaching after 41 years, and has retired a second time after 14 years as receptionist at Presbyterian Homes. Carol plans now to volunteer with adult ESL classes in the district. She enjoys travel, reading, walking and times with family and friends.



Thursday, December 13

Sister Mary Therese Krueger professed first vows in the fall of 2017 and resides in Chicago, Illinois. Currently, she is working on her masters in pastoral studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and ministering as a physical therapist at Advocate Christ Medical Center in Oak Lawn. She is part of the Justice Promoters, having passion for social justice.



Friday, December 14

Dora Serna, has been an associate for eight years. She is originally from Columbia but considers herself a "Dubuquer" by adoption.



Saturday, December 15

Sister Anne McCormick lives at Mount Loretto helping wherever and whenever she can.



Sunday, December 16

Charlotte McCoy lives in Peosta, Iowa, with her husband Jim. She keeps her life full by working for No Place Like Home and traveling. Char is a member of the Servant Seekers associate group.



Monday, December 17

Sister Annette Kestel lives in Dubuque, Iowa, and ministers at the formation coordinator for the Dubuque Presentation Sisters.



Tuesday, December 18

Bernie Graves lives in Kansas City, Missouri. She is a trained spiritual director and serves as an intern for the Souljourners Spiritual Director Formation Program in Atchison, Kansas.



Wednesday, December 19

Sister Cheryl Demmer is director of faith formation and RCIA director for Saints Mary and Mathias Parish in Muscatine and Saint Mary Parish in Wilton, both in Iowa. An important ministry for Sister Cheryl is the Ministers of Mercy program – the Homebound Ministry.



Thursday, December 20

Deb Jasper lives in Farley, Iowa, and works at Catholic Charities as the executive assistant to the director. She is a member of Servant Seekers associate group and married. Deb has three grown sons and daughter-in-laws and six grandchildren.



Friday, December 21

Sister Joy Peterson has been the promoter of justice for the Sisters of the Presentation since the fall of 2017. She also serves on the leadership team.



Saturday, December 22

Cady Windish is a mid-western girl from a small town in Illinois. She loves her job, which is teaching. She has traveled to different countries to teach and is back in Morton, Illinois. Cady enjoys being an associate and striving to develop in her faith. She is also obsessed with Christmas and is thrilled to be part of this Advent book.



Sunday, December 23

Sister Jennifer Rausch ministers in a 350-member senior living community in Hopkins, Minnesota. She regularly raises funds for the local IGA food shelf.



Monday, December 24

Anastasia Nicklaus Schmelzer currently ministers as the liturgy/music coordinator at St. Edward Parish in Waterloo, Iowa. She lives in a converted Catholic church in New Hartford, Iowa, and appreciates chances for Advent ponderings, both alone and with friends.



Tuesday, December 25

Sister Diana Blong has been the pastoral associate of Immaculate Conception Church in Charles City for 10 years. She is a member of the Lantern Flames associate group in north central Iowa.



Wednesday, December 26

Gino Pacetti lives in Oak Lawn, Illinois, and has been a Presentation associate since 2000, although he has been acquainted with the Presentation Sisters since 1965. He was married to his wife, Pat, for 60 years. Gino taught music for 40 years and was the music director at Saint Germaine Parish for 25 years.



Thursday, December 27

Sister Mary Dolores Moes lives at Mount Loretto and is in ministry of community prayer and service as needed. She also serves as sacristan, a job that she truly loves. She belongs to the associate group, Branches of the Word.



Friday, December 28

Michelle Covey has been a member of Saint Anthony Parish for the past 15 years and has been a Presentation associate since 2009. Michelle is married to Brian, and they have three grown children and four grandchildren. Michelle is active in the RCIA Program and also serves as a Eucharistic minister and sacristan.



Saturday, December 29

Sister Beth Driscoll lives in celebration and gratitude for 50 years as a member of the Sisters of the Presentation.



Sunday, December 30

Janine Marie Idziak, a native of Michigan, joined the philosophy faculty at Loras College in 1984. Now as Professor Emerita, she continues as director of the Bioethics Resource Center at Loras. She also works as health care ethics consultant for the Archdiocese of Dubuque and teaches in the archdiocesan Diaconate Formation Program.



Monday, December 31

Yvonne Kisch lives in Charles City, Iowa, and has been married for 45 years. She has four grown children and three grandchildren. Yvonne is a member of the Lantern Flames associate group, volunteers weekly at the local food pantry and is a member of the PV Volunteers. She is also the vice-president of the Dubuque Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women.



Tuesday, January 1

Mary Irene Stanton lives in Mason City, Iowa, and is a member of the Cities of Faith associate group. She is a retired teacher and secretary and likes to practice hospitality and making cards for various occasions.

Notes

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SISTERS
OF THE PRESENTATION
of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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*Sent with blessings from the
Presentation Associates and Sisters, Dubuque, Iowa*