

ADVENT

youth devotions
and reflections



November 29

1st Sunday of Advent

Pastor Chris

John the Baptist comes on the scene at the beginning of Advent in anticipation of the Messiah. We mark our advent season with waiting, watching, and seeking. Poet Nayyirah Waheed speaks accurately to our time of Advent.

I look for you

In the middle of the light

In the west of the day.

In the warm memory of the water.





November 30

Memphis Patterson, 7th grade

I like advent because it is very important to me because it brings my family together. My favorite family tradition at my dad's house is that my Mema gives all the grandkids little advent calendars to open up. At my mom's house on Christmas Eve we all sleep in the same room so that we can all wake up together. But also at my dad's house we get up really early, open gifts and sleep until noon but most of the time me and my sisters are awake and figuring out our gifts and talk but my little brother always stays up but tries to be quiet but he is not so it's kind of funny.



December 1

Per Nelson, freshman

One of my favorite Christmas traditions is Julotta. When I was little, I didn't care for it very much because of how early I would have to get up. Now however, I realized how much I enjoyed getting to get up that early and getting a "sneak peek" of what presents awaited when we got home. It's always cool having the service in the candle-light. Another one of my favorite Christmas traditions, was going to Ellinwood every year. We do not get to go anymore because my Grandma sold her house and lives here in town. We used to go and meet up with everyone on my mom's side of the family, and we would do lots of stuff there. We would get there early, and we would put up all the decorations. We would always look at the lights and eat lots of cookies.

December 2

Avery VanDerWege, 11th grade

In a year where there is so much uncertainty, it's important to remember God as a constant. It seems each week there is something else, causing you to scratch your head and question God's plan. Just in my personal activities this fall, there have been new risks that typically wouldn't exist in a normal year yet affect all areas of life.

As a student, I fear going remote and being separated from my classmates and teachers. As an athlete, I fear getting my team quarantined or missing irreplaceable games. I can't explain the nerve my volleyball team had during the two weeks leading up to the state volleyball tournament—when at any moment we could be told we've been in contact with Covid and must stay home. As a CNA at Bethany Village, I hurt while listening to residents beg for a simple hug from family, though I know they are in good hands and we are keeping them safe. As a citizen of the United States, I worry about our nation and concern the upcoming, chaotic election.

However, amongst the uncertainty of the last sixth months, I've had the comforting lyrics in "You are Mine" on replay throughout my head: "Do not be afraid, I am with you I have called you each by name. Come and follow Me I will bring you home. I love you and you are mine". So go forth and use God as your constant, holding tight when the road gets bumpy. As you begin to question the unknown path, or worry about the novel ways, remember that God is with you and you are loved, and you are His.

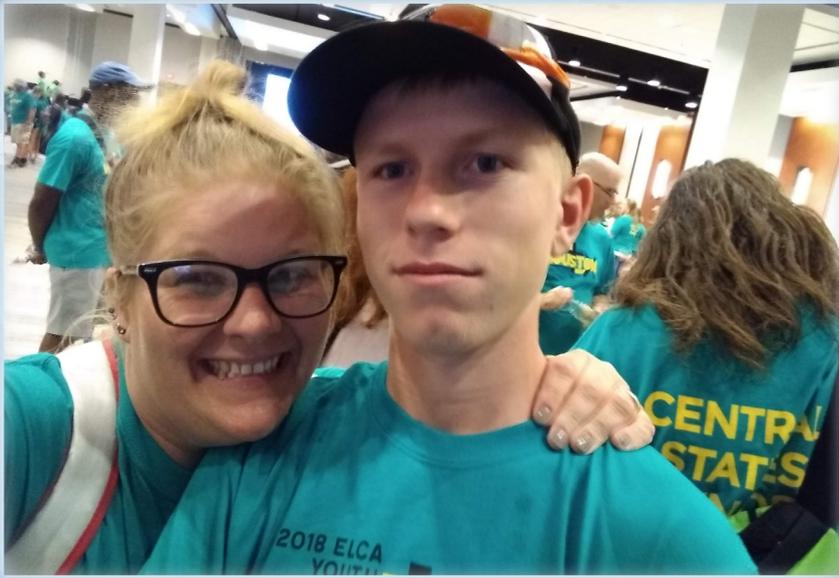
"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10

December 3

Nicholas Dreier, freshman

Every Christmas eve we come home from my Grandma's house and once we are home we go to bed. I barely sleep at all. I get up around 4 or 5 and look at the presents anxiously and shake them trying to figure out what they are because I am very impatient. I go back to my room once I have figured out what I think they are and try to read or do something to take my mind off the presents. When they all get up around 8, after my parents have some coffee, we open up the presents and throw the wrapping paper at my dad. We sit around the tree with smiles on our faces and merry hearts. Then we all watch a Christmas Story.





December 4

Torsten Nelson, 8th grade

I remember Christmas with my grandmas. I enjoyed those times with Grandma Wanda and Gigi. Grandma is in Heaven and Gigi is at Bethany Home.

I miss going to Ellinwood to see Gigi and the relatives. Everyone would pack into her house and stay for a couple of days. The presents for everyone would take up half of the living room. We would do Christmas Eve service together, then wake up to breakfast, full stockings, and then open Christmas presents.

When we went to Grandma's in McPherson, we would get up really early for Julotta, then open a few presents at home and head to Grandma's for a big meal, more presents, and playing with Joshua and Paige.



December 5

Gabe House, 8th grade

2nd Corinthians Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

God gave us an amazing gift with baby Jesus. The best gift I ever received was my baby brother Simon who is now a toddler. He is the best gift because I have learned so much from him. Before he was born, my brother and I would play rough. Simon taught us how to play in a new gentle way. I have learned to always watch behind me because he likes to sneak up on me with his dump truck.

Think about the best gift you ever received and why you think it was the best. Happy advent and Merry Christmas.

December 6

2nd Sunday of Advent

Pastor Amy Truhe

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Isaiah 40:3-5

Have you ever ironed a piece of fabric? A hot plate is run over fabric that has wrinkles and the material becomes smooth. It's like magic. Sometimes, the material bunches up a little and fabric gets a sharp, smooth fold in it.

When Isaiah says, "make straight ... a highway for our God" I think of ironing the world with the love of God, smoothing out the things that are wrong, flattening out the wrinkles that make our lives difficult.

"Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all people shall see it together." When we open ourselves to smoothing the world with the life-changing iron of God's love, we create a simple way for God to be seen in the world.

As you go about your week, preparing for Christmas to arrive, I hope you will take the time to offer God's love to people, helping to smooth out the wrinkles in their day and opening a way for God to move more smoothly in the world.

December 7

Jillian Hett, 8th grade

Christmas traditions are something that we all have. You may have fun traditions, sad traditions, or reflective traditions. I have one such tradition.

Each Christmas my family bundles up and braves the cold to look at Christmas lights. With Christmas music playing, warm blankets, and me and my sisters constant bickering, it really feels like Christmas. We usually take 30-45 minutes to look in wonder at the lights.

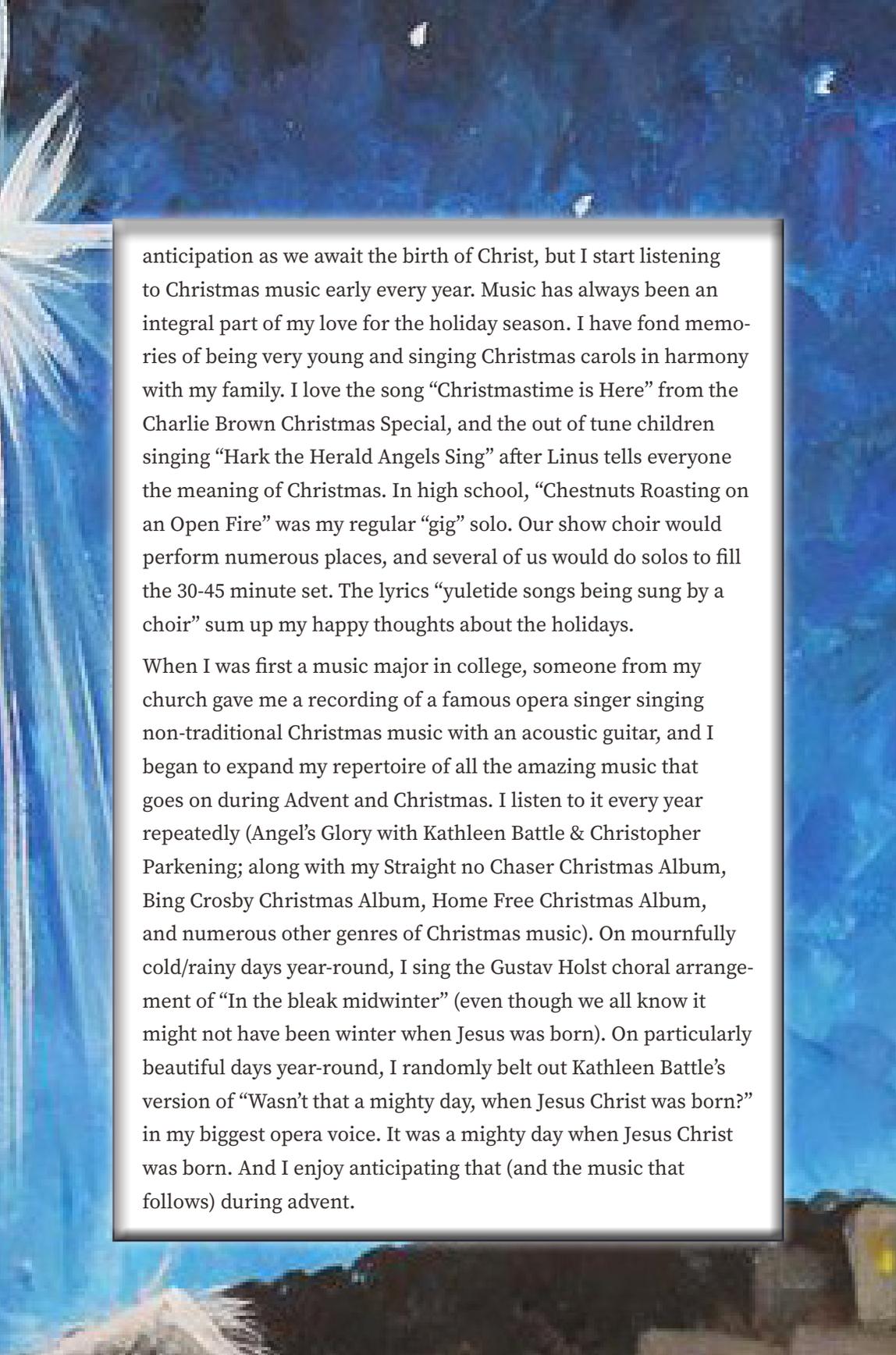
My sister and I have a very typical sibling relationship. We both annoy each other to no end. And although I may never say it or act like it, I love my sister more than anything. We always argue and despise each other's guts, but something about looking at Christmas lights has us putting that all aside for half an hour.

As we drive around in a sleepy haze, I always come to realize that although I grow tired of my family, they are more important than any gift. That is why something as simple as Christmas lights is my favorite tradition. So this holiday season, if you don't already, I would ask you to take some time with your family or just yourself and look at the lights.

December 8

Jeanne Lucas, MELC youth leader

Christmas music is my favorite. I could sing Christmas music year-round and never get tired of it. I know that advent is a time of



anticipation as we await the birth of Christ, but I start listening to Christmas music early every year. Music has always been an integral part of my love for the holiday season. I have fond memories of being very young and singing Christmas carols in harmony with my family. I love the song “Christmastime is Here” from the Charlie Brown Christmas Special, and the out of tune children singing “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” after Linus tells everyone the meaning of Christmas. In high school, “Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire” was my regular “gig” solo. Our show choir would perform numerous places, and several of us would do solos to fill the 30-45 minute set. The lyrics “yuletide songs being sung by a choir” sum up my happy thoughts about the holidays.

When I was first a music major in college, someone from my church gave me a recording of a famous opera singer singing non-traditional Christmas music with an acoustic guitar, and I began to expand my repertoire of all the amazing music that goes on during Advent and Christmas. I listen to it every year repeatedly (Angel’s Glory with Kathleen Battle & Christopher Parkening; along with my Straight no Chaser Christmas Album, Bing Crosby Christmas Album, Home Free Christmas Album, and numerous other genres of Christmas music). On mournfully cold/rainy days year-round, I sing the Gustav Holst choral arrangement of “In the bleak midwinter” (even though we all know it might not have been winter when Jesus was born). On particularly beautiful days year-round, I randomly belt out Kathleen Battle’s version of “Wasn’t that a mighty day, when Jesus Christ was born?” in my biggest opera voice. It was a mighty day when Jesus Christ was born. And I enjoy anticipating that (and the music that follows) during advent.



December 9

Sara McCullick, 7th grade

My favorite family Christmas tradition is the red hot jello that mom makes and puts up the Christmas tree. My other favorite tradition is when we go to my great grandpa's house on Christmas eve and all the kids go to the basement and wrestle and play games. And when the kids perform singing, dancing, and playing and instruments. I also like seeing my cousins that live in Texas and my favorite cousin Hunter who is older than me and even though he lives in salina I still like seeing him.

December 10

Ceeley Friesen, 7th grade

I love the season of Advent, the time leading up to Christmas and Jesus' birth. In our Church, one of my favorite traditions is the lighting of the Advent candles to symbolize Love, Hope, Joy and Peace. My favorite family tradition on Christmas Eve is to read the "Christmas Story" together. My mom gets my sister and I each 3 gifts, to help us remember that the Wisemen brought baby Jesus 3 gifts. Those were gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It is important to remember the reason for the season!



December 11

Ericka Lysell, BLC youth leader

One of my favorite Christmas tradition is dopp i gryta. As a child, we would go to my Grandma Thyra's every Christmas Eve lunch to eat broth made with the potatis karv drippings and her homemade Swedish rye bread. Both sides of my family attended this event. She always taught us that this tradition was to remember those less fortunate at Christmas time. After she died, I carried on the tradition, and invite family and friends to enjoy in this special time.

I also loved when I was young, going to church in my pajamas and singing carols with the family carolers at Julotta. I loved when Pastor Johnson would do his sermons in costume. When I was a teenager, I didn't necessarily like getting up early, but once I got to church, it was always as beautiful and meaningful as I remembered. As an adult, I love every aspect of it. I love the songs, especially singing "When Christmas Morn is Dawning" in Swedish. I love seeing all the people and hearing the Proclamation being read. As an adult, starting the tradition with my kids of going to Julotta was so special. And of course, I can't pass up writing about Julotta memories without mentioning Pastor Phil Hett when he caught his bulletin on fire during the lighting of the individual candles. The look on his face was priceless. The next year the north wing left a fireman figurine and a fire extinguisher on his chair. I have never missed a Julotta service and feel so blessed to be a part of the Bethany Lutheran Church family.



December 12

Haven Lysell, 11th grade

My favorite memories from church come from Christmas mornings. I love when we all sing silent night together and it is almost completely dark, except for our candles. My family and I always have so much fun on those early mornings



December 13

3rd Sunday of Advent

Pastor Chris

Hope is one of the themes of Advent. Our hope is found in the one who created and sustains our world, hope through God alone. I resonate with this poem from Emily Dickinson

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -
And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -
I’ve heard it in the chilliest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.



December 14

Chloe Patrick, 11th grade

When Christmas season comes around many say their favorite day is Christmas, but for me it would be Christmas Eve because this is when we get to have our Christmas Eve church service. I look forward to this day every year when I think about it, it sends chills up my body. My favorite part is when we all gather around the church with candles, and slowly start lighting them one by one. Once all the candles are all lit the lights get shut off, and we start to sing Silent Night as a congregation. Singing all together this song I can feel the holy spirit inside my body, and it just reminds how grateful I am to be a child of God.



December 15

Tytus Reed, 10th grade

My favorite memory of church would probably have to be the Christmas morning service that is really early in the morning every year. This is my favorite memory because I remember every year that me, my mom, sister, and dad would go to church, and it was just a time that we were all together. It is also my favorite memory because I was able to wear Pj's to the church service which meant I did not have to change before going to the service. I also liked that we turned the lights off and the only light that was provided was by candles and it just makes the church look so beautiful when we do that. I also like Christmas morning service because afterwards I go over to my grandparents' house and spend the whole day with the people that I care about. Another thing that I like about Christmas morning service is that I get to open gifts after the service is over and who doesn't like gifts. I like Christmas morning services for many reasons but the main one is that it is a cool service where I get to spend the rest of the day with the ones that I care about and that is why my favorite memory of church is the Christmas morning service.



December 16

Taytum Reed, 8th grade

My favorite Christmas memory is when I got my dog. It was Christmas Eve 2015. We were eating out like we do every year and then we went to the Georgetown Santas. Then we went around and saw Christmas lights because that is our Christmas Eve tradition. After we were looking at Christmas lights we went home and when we walked in the door and went into the living room and there was a puppy sitting in the living room. The first thing I did was run in and pick her up to go show my parents I was so so so happy. Then I remember we took her out and while she was outside we were sitting in the house deciding her name and we finally all decided on Star. So that is how Christmas Eve turned in to the day we got Star.



December 17

Braxton House, 10th grade

One of my favorite memories of Christmas is one year when my brother and I both got our Xbox. We had been begging and begging our mom to get it and she said we will see. So when Christmas came around my brother and I didn't see anything that could be it, until we got to the last present. It was labeled "From, Santa" and my brother and I were so happy because it was such a heavy present and we were really hoping. Then as soon as we tore it open and saw the Xbox logo we were so happy and it is just one of my favorite Christmas moments

December 18

Sawyer Lysell-Alkire, 9th grade

Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.



And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

A voice says, “Cry out.” And I said, “What shall I cry?”

“All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field

The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.”

You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, “Here is your God!” See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

I am comforted by lots of things, my family, my friends and even video games. The people can help me not be scared in times where I might be afraid. The video games help me from being bored. My dog Sid also brings me comfort in many times that I am struggling. I feel comfort when I am in church. How does God comfort you and what kinds of things bring comfort to you?

December 19

Avery Kruckenberg, 10th grade

I love Christmas because of all the yummy smells. The Candles and the perfumes that come out when it's Christmas are the best.

I always get the vanilla been Noelle perfume this time of year.

December 20

4th Sunday of Advent

Pastor Amy Truhe

The angel continued, "...For nothing will be impossible with God."

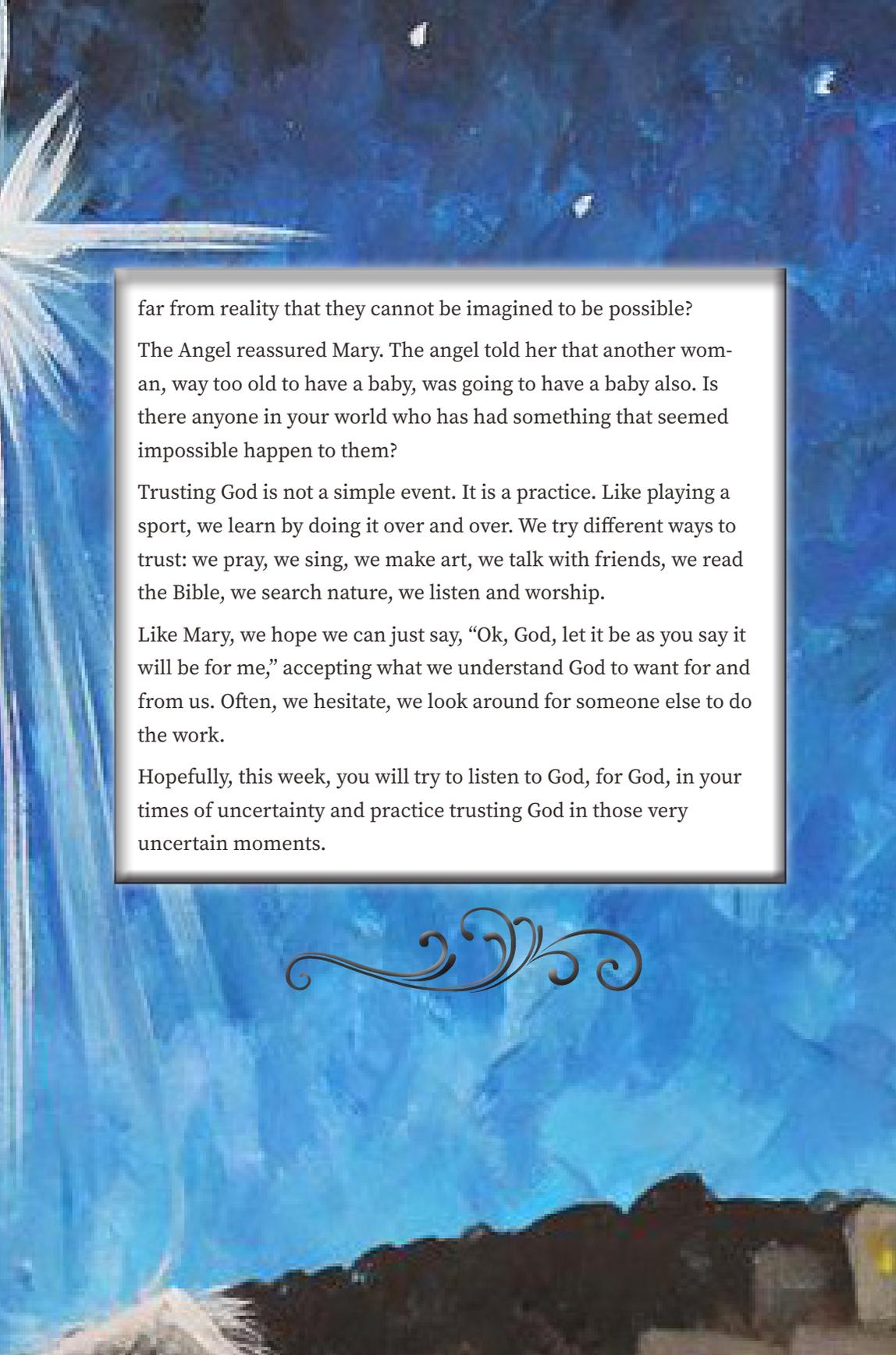
Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her."

Luke 1: 37-38

An extraordinary opportunity comes to you, how do you respond? Do you immediately say, "sure! I'm all in!"? Do you hesitate? What is your first thought when something really unusual comes as an opportunity—or a demand--to you?

The angel gave Mary this moment to hear God's amazing ability to do THE IMPOSSIBLE! She was going to have God's baby!

When you think about things that are impossible for your life, what comes to mind? How do we trust God when things seem so



far from reality that they cannot be imagined to be possible?

The Angel reassured Mary. The angel told her that another woman, way too old to have a baby, was going to have a baby also. Is there anyone in your world who has had something that seemed impossible happen to them?

Trusting God is not a simple event. It is a practice. Like playing a sport, we learn by doing it over and over. We try different ways to trust: we pray, we sing, we make art, we talk with friends, we read the Bible, we search nature, we listen and worship.

Like Mary, we hope we can just say, “Ok, God, let it be as you say it will be for me,” accepting what we understand God to want for and from us. Often, we hesitate, we look around for someone else to do the work.

Hopefully, this week, you will try to listen to God, for God, in your times of uncertainty and practice trusting God in those very uncertain moments.



December 21

Olivia Bengtson, 10th grade

What I love most about the Christmas season is family. Everyone comes down and we all can have fun together. Another one of my favorites is seeing Christmas lights that represent that Christmas is near. Although I have favorites, I love the holiday season as a whole.

December 22

Jake Lucas, 12th grade

I like the atmosphere during Christmas time. It's relaxing.

Olivia Ford, 10th grade

I love Christmas because everyone in town is joyful. There are Christmas lights downtown and everyone has Christmas cheer. I love being able to give gifts and see their faces when they open it. I love the food drive and helping the children that need food for the holidays.



December 23

Ayla Smith Bolin, 8th grade

Ephesians 5:19

speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.

Church is a great way to get a better relationship with God. I am a musician and love the music our church does. It is a great way to praise and worship. I love the people too. They are so welcoming and including it makes the whole worship experience better.

December 24

Conner Smith-Bolin, 7th grade

I like Christmas at church because there is a play about baby Jesus and how he helped people. My little sister got to play Jesus when she was a baby, and she didn't cry once because the people that were holding her were gentle and nice. Usually all the family we have in Lindborg go to the Christmas play because they like it so much. We usually sing songs and I don't like singing but the teachers make it fun so you want to sing. The people in charge of the set up do a really good job. They have trees, fake fire and an actual wood crib that the baby gets put in. overall it is really fun and you have a good time.

December 25

We hope that you have enjoyed this book of devotions and reflections. This is a Christmas unlike any other for many of our parishioners. Some have been separated from family due to COVID 19 for holiday season, or even an extended amount of time before the holidays. Some are celebrating their first Christmas since the death of a loved one. Our wish is that this devotion helped you feel closer to the youth of Bethany Lutheran and Messiah Evangelical Lutheran and the staff that are working with them. We wish you all the blessings and peace possible in the year 2021. The Spirit of the Lord be with you.

Luke 2:4-14

Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was
with the angel a multitude
of the heavenly host
praising God and saying:
Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace,
goodwill toward men!





graphic design by Ida Rencher
www.etsy.com/shop/vintagegraceart

