

ADVENT

Art work by Marvin Barham

**A Devotional Booklet for the
Season of Advent - 2018
The Union Church in Waban**

ADVENT

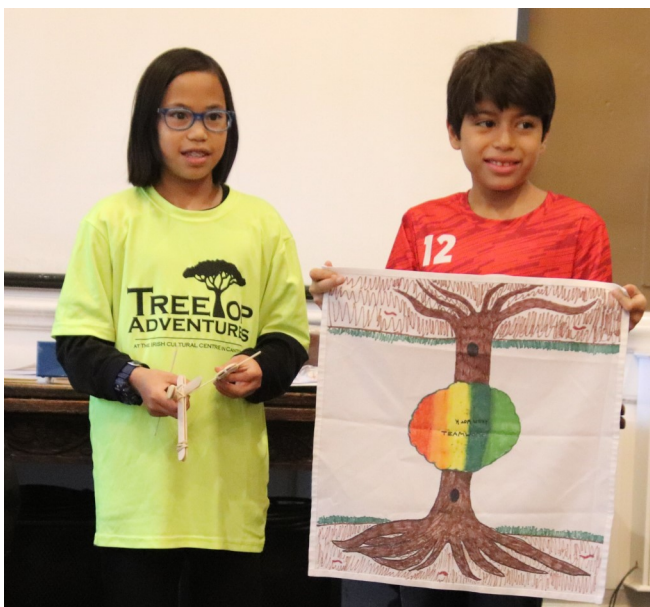
ABOUT THE PRAYER FLAGS

At our All Church Retreat in November, we spent some time together stepping out of the boat by imagining what the world could look like if we were able to leave behind/move beyond all that keeps us and all of God's good creation from thriving.

These imaginings were turned into prayer flags which were hung on a network of ribbon (symbolizing our connection one to another) that was strung around the room. On Sunday morning, we gathered under these flags and around the altar (seen above) for worship.



We include these prayer flags in the pages that follow. As we move into the season of Advent, waiting and preparing, imagining and making ready, may we join with God and with each other so that the Spirit of these prayer flags may become our lived reality.



ADVENT

From Pastor Stacy Swain

In the holy poem which is the Christian liturgical year, we are entering Advent. Advent — a liminal space. It is a space of unknowing. A time of deep darkness where we wait, releasing our selves from our certainties and allowing possibility—hope, peace, joy and love to meet us. Advent is a time of becoming, which is our life long vocation.

It is not a coincidence that Advent and the coming of Christmas falls at the time when cold and darkness is gathering. In the early centuries following the death of Jesus, the Jesus movement spread across the Mediterranean Basin and then made its way north across the Alps. When it did it met a people, the Celts who knew not Jesus, but knew quite well the first incarnation of God in the natural world. They being of the northern latitudes knew what it was to feel the night grow longer. They knew what it was to feel the earth grow colder. And they knew what it was to long for the time when the earth would turn, once again, God willing, towards the sun.

And so when the Jesus followers met the Celtic people they recognized a truth they held in common — that the deepest darkness is not devoid of life. In the deepest darkness the newborn child that is and will become the Christ is born. May we in this season of Advent open ourselves to the profundity of this mystery. That our lives, our world, may be the place where the Christ is encountered.

I hope that through the pages of this reflection booklet the mystery that is revealing itself may meet you in your deepest longing.

For All Ages — Suggestions for Using this Booklet with Children **From Rev. Amy Clark Feldman**

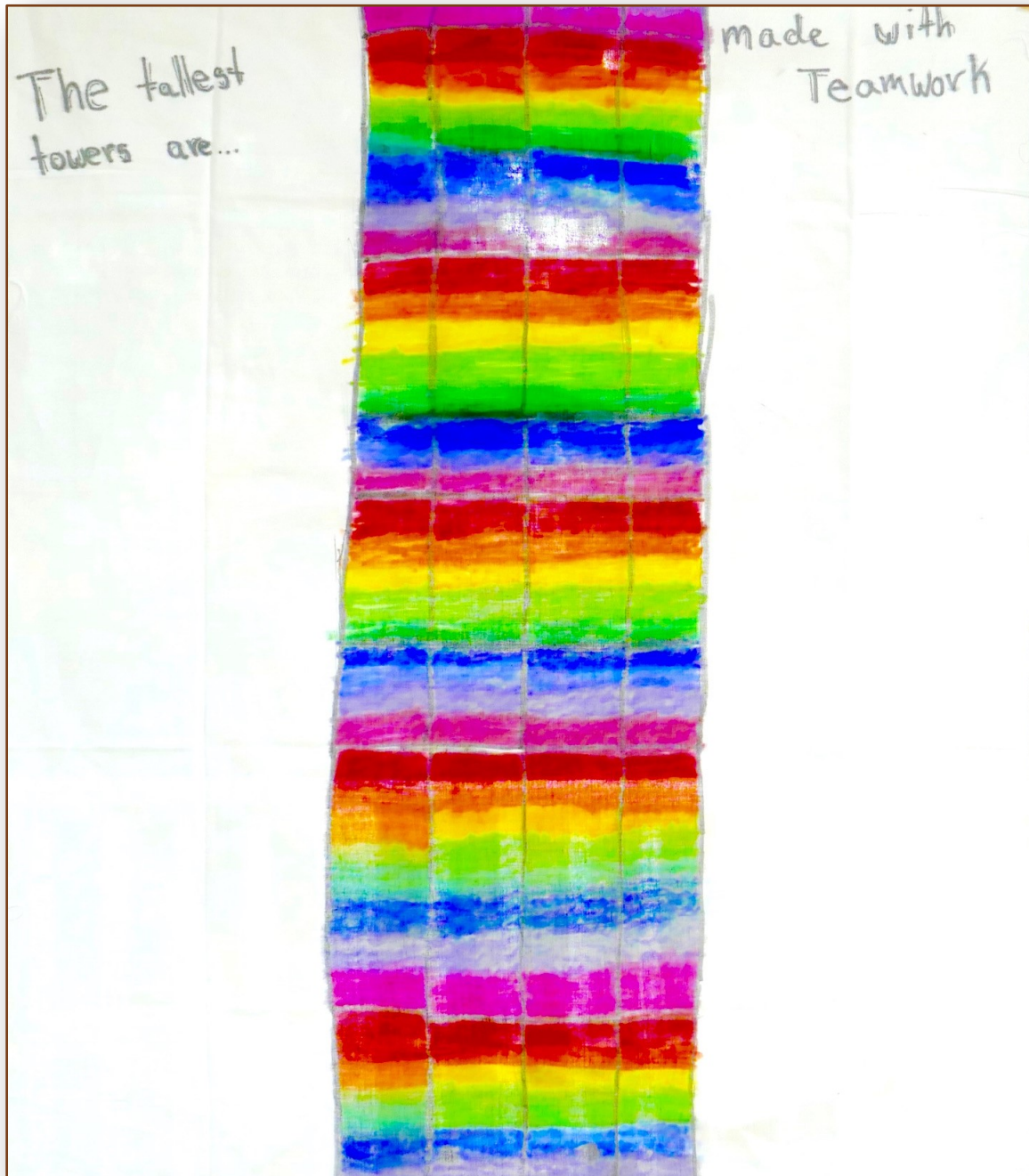
In this booklet, we have also included pages called “For All Ages.” On these pages the prayers, activities and songs are age-appropriate for children, as well as adults.

If you have an Advent Wreath at home, you may want use this booklet as you light each candle. The scripture passages, all-age prayers and songs can accompany your weekly candle-lighting. If you don’t have an Advent Wreath, but would like to try lighting candles this year, know that you can use any four candles to create one (perhaps tying 3 purple and 1 pink ribbon around them to symbolize the colors of Advent, or placing them on purple/pink construction paper “coasters”). You can even make a wreath out of paper, adding yellow paper flames to the “candles” each week. Of course, you don’t need a wreath to share the scripture stories, prayers, songs and ideas!

However you journey though Advent this season, we hope you (and the kids in your life) enjoy this booklet and find it a helpful companion on your walk toward the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love of the manger.

HOPE

WEEK 1 - A PRAYER FLAG



HOPE

WEEK 1 - READINGS AND A PRAYER

Reading 1 - Jeremiah 33:14-16

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."



Art: Mary and Joseph
2011 Scott Laumann

Reading 2 - Luke 21:25-36

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

A Prayer for Hope

Holy One, When our eyes are heavy and so are our hearts, when we see more endings than beginnings, and when we have lost the Way and do not know where to turn, come to us.

Kindle your Hope in our hearts.

Have its warmth awaken our own compassion for ourselves and for the world.

Have its light bring delight into our lives again. Have it take us by the hand and lead us home to you.

In the name of the one who brings us Hope we pray, Amen.

HOPE

WEEK 1 - A PRAYER FLAG



HOPE

WEEK 1 - REFLECTION

Reflection—Advent 2018: Risking Obedience **By Priscilla Lasmarias Kelso**

In reflecting on the theme of “getting off the boat” to follow Jesus and the meaning of Advent, I see several parallels that have to do with the risk of obedience. Obedience for holy purposes requires risk-taking – one could sink in untested waters like Peter, or a couple named Mary and Joseph could take part in the perilous drama of the Holy Nativity because they had been chosen for the part, albeit reluctantly at first. Fast forward to the search for the Child by the wise men who followed a star for navigation in inclement weather and rough terrain in obedience to the Call (See “Journey of the Magi” by T.S. Eliot).



They could all have played it safe. Who needs the inconvenience, not to mention the embarrassment of looking foolish or incompetent? Why say Yes to something that does not immediately promise a stable outcome for the price one has to pay by cooperating with plans someone else has made? How does one know that God’s blueprint is dependable?

Yet, we know the outcome of Peter’s seemingly foolhardy move to get off the boat towards Jesus. We know that Mary and Joseph became the primary sources of love and nurture for the Christ Child. And we know that the wise men did find their destination in the end.

All this by taking risks (even “the risk of Birth,” according to Madeleine L’Engle). Think of how the narrative would have turned out if those who were called by God did not dare to put aside their caution, or over-analyzed the odds to the point of inaction, or just plain turned away because obedience was too costly. In contrast, they were shown to be faithful and were rewarded. Holy obedience has its rewards.

“A long obedience in the same direction” is a phrase I love. May we, as followers of Jesus, be inspired this Advent season by those who practiced risking obedience and found God’s plans to be trustworthy after all.

HOPE

WEEK 1 - A PRAYER FLAG



HOPE



It is the first week of the journey of Advent, a journey through four weeks of wonder and waiting. It is a journey of preparing — not just our homes, but our hearts and our whole selves — to welcome Jesus again, and to open ourselves to receive anew the gifts of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

As we look ahead with HOPE at the season, and are invited to pause and consider our path to the manger this season. How and with whom will we journey this season? What baggage or expectations do we carry with us?

LIGHT THE CANDLE OF HOPE: Tonight in our homes — and hearts — we light the first candle of Advent, the Candle of Hope, as we sing *O Come Emmanuel*, God Among Us, praying that God will light our path back to the manger this Advent. Light the candle as you sing and pray.



SING: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who ordered all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in its ways to go. **Refrain**

Ideas for This Week:

- Make an Advent Wreath at Union Church or find 4 candles (real or out of construction paper!) and prepare your own wreath at home
- Light the first candle together as you sing *O Come Emmanuel* and take turns reading this week's Scripture and Prayer
- Choose a mitten (or two or three!) from The Union Church Mitten Tree and find gifts that will bring Joy and Hope to our neighbors in need.



PRAY

May this Advent season be more
than busyness and buying;
More than candy and candles.
May we travel with the shepherds,
wait with the magi,
wonder with Joseph,
ponder with Mary,
sing with the angels
and open what we have
with the innkeeper.

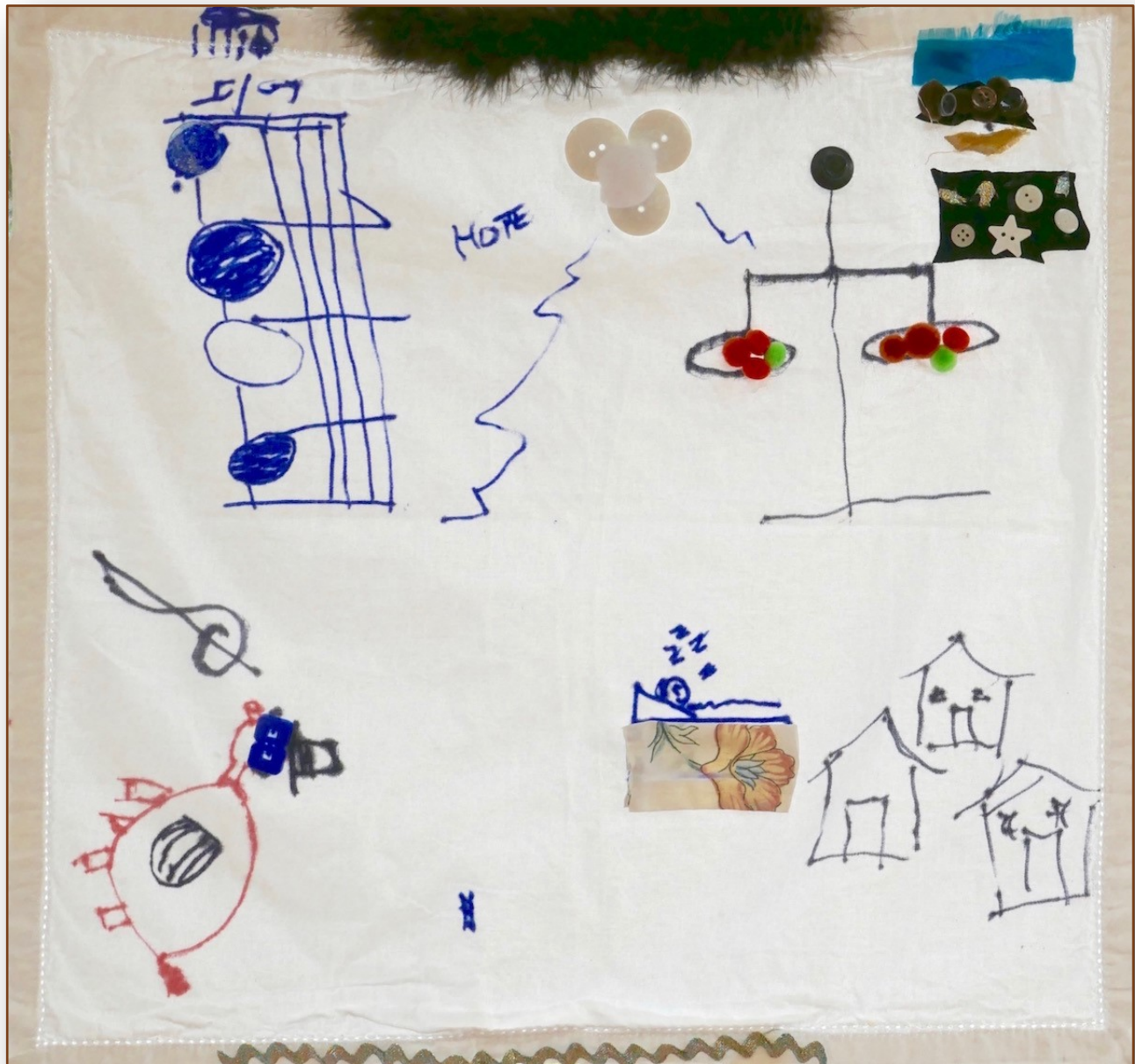
May we live out your nativity
today,
tomorrow,
and every day following.
For we believe, O God,
this is not just a story
on a page of the Bible,
but a celebration
of you becoming human
to save us,
show us,
call us
to live your Way.

May we respond to your love
like the shepherds,
follow it like the magi,
trust your love like Mary and Joseph,
celebrate like the angels
and share it like the innkeeper.
Today we can only say thanks
and tell you, O God,
we will share this love and hope
with the world.
AMEN

From Spillbeans.org.uk

PEACE

WEEK 2 - A PRAYER FLAG



PEACE

WEEK 2 - READINGS AND A POEM

Reading 1 - Malachi 3:1-4

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.



Cover Art from Story Warren

Reading 2 - Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

The Peace of Wild Things by Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
And I wake in the night at the last sound
In fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
Rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
Who do not tax their lives with forethought
Of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
Waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world and am free.

PEACE

WEEK 2 - A PRAYER FLAG



PEACE

WEEK 2 - REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS

Signs of God's presence are all around us, if only we open our eyes. If we look as the photographer looks through the camera's lens, we can see Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace all around the world.



Photo by Olivia DaDalt, Siem Reap, Cambodia

The chrysalis enters the world promising HOPE for everlasting life.
Almighty Creator, may hope for a better world begin with changes in me.

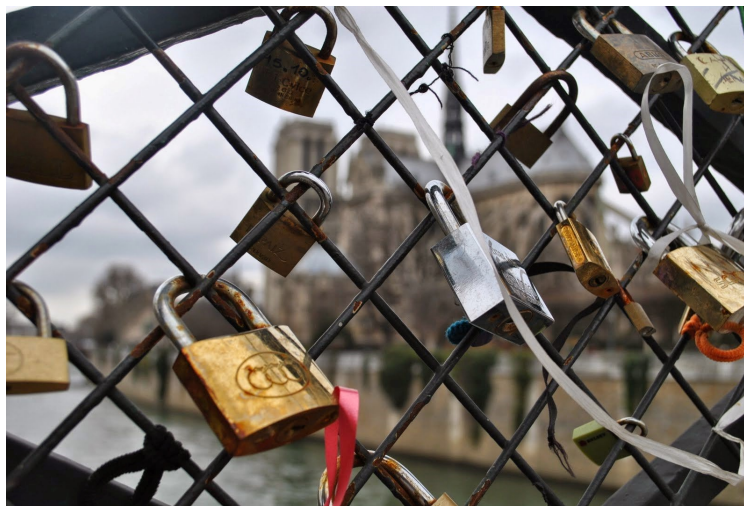


Photo by Olivia DaDalt, Paris, France

Like the waters of the mighty river, God's LOVE continues without end.
Oh most sacred God, we are blessed to be securely locked in your enduring love.

(Continued on page 15)

PEACE

WEEK 2 - A PRAYER FLAG





Photo by Olivia

DaDalt, Tay Ninh, Vietnam

Our simple acts of kindness and generosity can bring joy to others.

Dear God, help me to be the person my dog thinks I am.



lin, Ireland

Photo by Olivia DaDalt, Dub-

Oh Holy One, we know that the sacred can be found in
the flicker of a candle in the dark. This Christmas season,
let every burning candle be a sign of your PEACE on earth.

by Sandra DaDalt

PEACE

WEEK 2 - A PRAYER FLAG



PEACE

A Poem by Oleg Tumarkin

Forever aliens
of paths untrodden
Countryless people
Wanderers and roamers

God has given them
A heart of wonder
He Himself became
Their path and road

Seekers of the City
Where God is Lord,
He sits at the gates,
He blossoms and flows.

He is the walls and the floor
The temple and priest
He - Creator and King
And the light and the mist

In that City they seek
not the promise of bliss
But to serve and to be
Shining out His peace

PEACE

WEEK 2 - A PRAYER FLAG



PEACE



We light the second candle of Advent: The Candle of Peace. We journey with Mary and Joseph to the manger. Sometimes the journey isn't easy. It can feel like we'll never get there. Sometimes we get lost, take the wrong path, or feel tired or scared. There are times when we miss the people who used to walk with us that aren't with us anymore. Through it all, we can know that we are not alone. We can find comfort and courage, knowing that God walks with us, leading us to the Peace of the manger. We can share God's Peace by sharing the journey and walking with others.



SING: Let There Be Peace On Earth

Let there be peace on earth,
And let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth,
The peace that is meant to be.

With God as Creator,
We are family,
Let us walk with each other,
In perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me,
Let this be the moment now.
With every step I take,
Let this be my joyous vow.

To take each moment,
And live each moment
In peace eternally,
Let there be peace on earth,
And let it begin with me.

Ideas for This Week:

- Light the second candle of Advent, the Candle of Peace. Read Luke 3:1-6; Pray and Sing.
- Go for a walk in nature—breathe, listen, notice God's creatures and beauty around you. How is God preparing you and your family for your journey this season?
- Watch *A Charlie Brown Christmas: The Meaning of Christmas* (If viewing online, [CLICK HERE TO LINK](#))



PRAY

'Let me tell you how I love you,'
goes the song of God,
a song that never ends,
instead becoming more elaborate
as time goes on.

The God of love
goes to extremes
to show us how
we are loved beyond measure.

God never tires
of finding new ways,
revealing to us
when least expected
the height,
and depth,
and width
of Love.

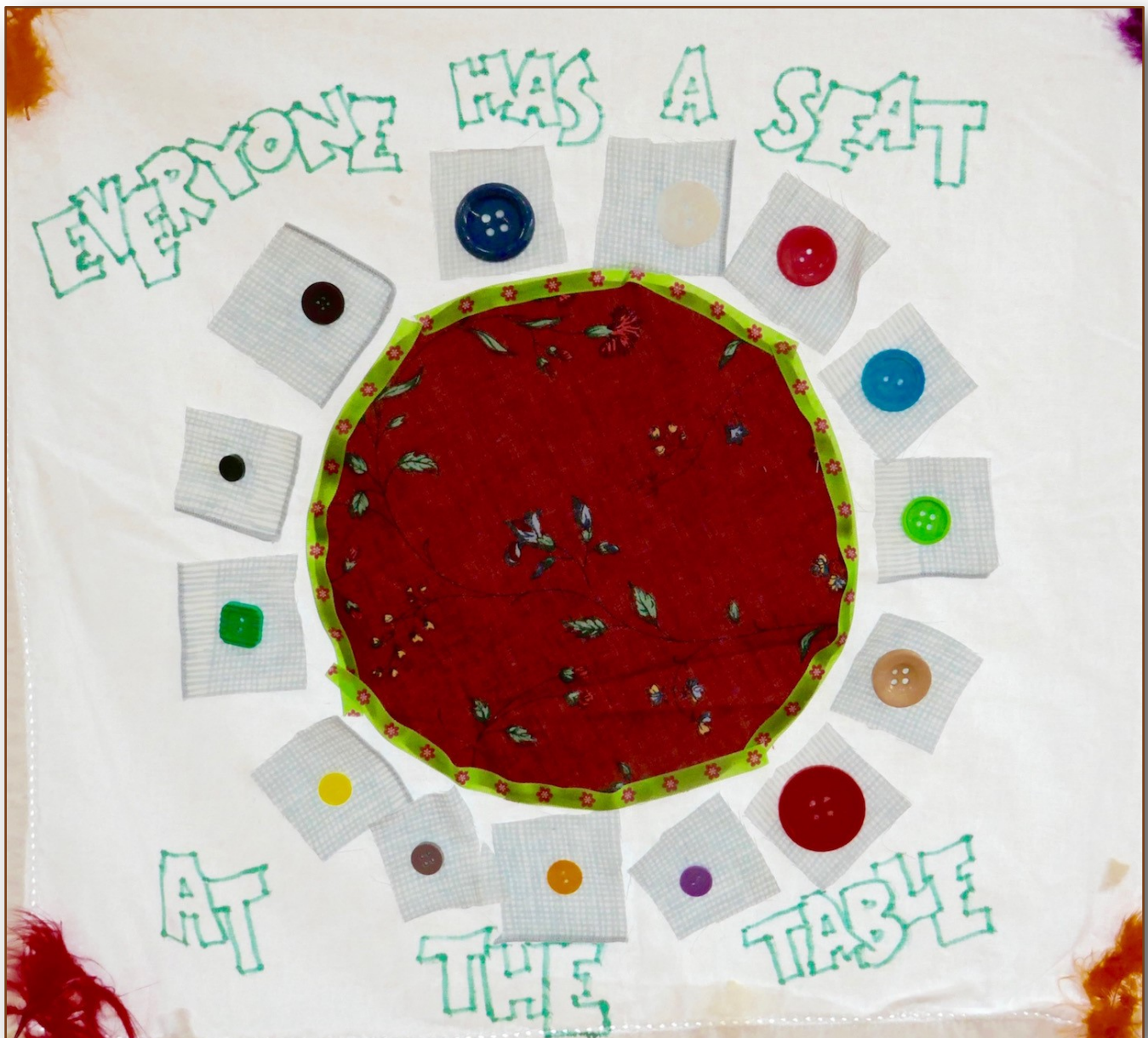
And, just when we think
we've got the message,
we are stunned again
by the enormity of such love
that pursues us
to the ends of the earth,
stopping us in our tracks,
in our daily grind
compelling us
to look up and wonder,
and be filled with hope
and with joy and peace
as we bask
in God's love for us.

Loving God, thank you! AMEN

From Spillbeans.org.uk

JOY

WEEK 3 - PRAYER FLAG



JOY

WEEK 3 - READINGS

Reading 1 - Zephaniah 3:14-20

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord.



Art by Nicole Besack

Reading 2 - Luke 3:7-18

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

JOY

WEEK 3— A PRAYER FLAG



JOY

WEEK 3- REFLECTION

“Stepping Out” By Bart Kelso

Our Advent and Christmas hymns call us to ponder, and to wonder, at the entry of God into this world of time and space, to this planet which we call home. What we casually call “The Incarnation” was, for Jesus, nothing less than the leaving behind of all that was secure, ordered, assured, and glorious, so as to experience humanity with us and for us.

Ponder, for instance, this stanza from “Once in David's Royal City”:

“He came to earth from heaven
who is God and Lord of all,
and his shelter was a stable,
and his cradle was a stall:
with the poor and meek and lowly
lived on earth, our Savior holy.”

And this, from “Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light”:

“How could he quit his kingly state
for such a world of greed and hate?
What deep humiliation
secured the world's salvation!”

Both of these hymns, and scores of others, elaborate upon the wonder of Christ’s humility, his risk-taking, and his saving purpose, as expressed in the Word by the Apostle Paul:

“Jesus . . . had equal status with God but . . . set aside
the privileges of deity and . . . became human.”
(Philippians 2: 5-7 The Message)

This Advent and Christmas we look back upon several sermons and reflections based upon Jesus walking on the water, and encouraging Peter to climb out of his boat and do the same. (Matthew 14:22-33) Perhaps that account can be another lens through which to wonder at the Incarnation: that Jesus, having left the security of heaven’s “boat,” in order to walk on earthly waters, beckons us to step out of our “boats” too, and approach him in bold faith.

JOY

WEEK 3— A PRAYER FLAG



JOY

WEEK 3– A POEM

By Oleg Tumarkin

Precious Lord, Mighty God, The Creator,
Who alone can open the seal,
He alone can look into the secret,
That today to us is revealed

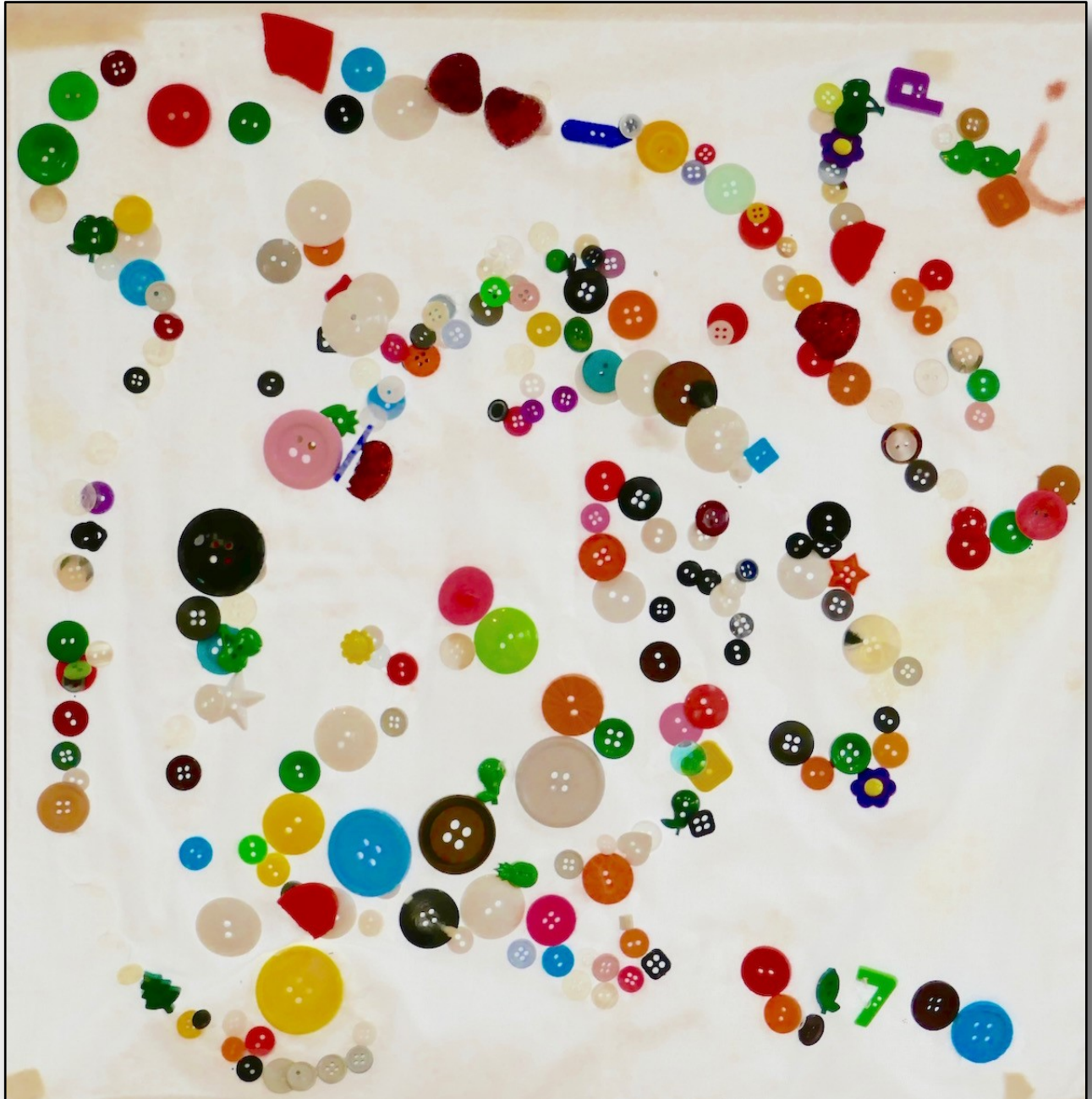
All the universe vast,
and all creatures diverse
cannot fathom the ultimate wisdom of God
who came up with the death and the life of the cross
to produce many sons, whom he thus set apart

He continued to work through the Spirit of Life
To build up them together as bride
Pure, holy and dressed in white she comes
Satisfying the very Lord's heart



JOY

WEEK 3— A PRAYER FLAG



JOY

FOR ALL AGES



We light the third candle of Advent: The Candle of Joy! This week we remember Mary's Joy in saying 'Yes!' to God's special call for her. We can remember that when Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, Elizabeth's baby leaps for Joy inside her womb. We can feel the Joy of our own journey through Advent, knowing that Christmas will soon be here! It is a Joy born from the Love and Peace and Hope that Mary's little baby will bring into the world.



SING: Joy to the World

Joy to the world
The Lord has come
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and nature sing
And heaven and nature sing
And heaven and heaven and nature sing

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

Ideas for This Week:

- Light the third candle of Advent, the Candle of Joy. Read the story of Mary, the Angel and Elizabeth (Luke 1). Pray and Sing.
- Dance with Joy! Looking for an Advent soundtrack? You can listen to kids' music, *Rain for Roots: Waiting Songs* for Advent at: rainforroots.bandcamp.com/album/waiting-songs. Scroll to the bottom to find the full songs for free.
- Watch: *The Christmas Story*, created by St. Paul's Church, Auckland, New Zealand

(If Online: [CLICK HERE TO LINK](#))



PRAY

*One leader reads, and then all respond with the **BOLD** together*

When God had a job, the angel said

All: YES!

When God needed help, Mary said

All: YES!

When she heard the news, Elizabeth said

All: YES!

Lord God, when you have a job and when you need help, may we always say

All: YES!

Help us, like the angel, to share the good news of your love; help us, like Mary, to carry the good news of your love; and help us, like Elizabeth, to rejoice in the good news of your love so that everyone who hears it will shout

ALL: YES!

AMEN!

From Spillbeans.org.uk



LOVE

WEEK 4 - A PRAYER FLAG



LOVE

WEEK 4 - READINGS

Reading 1 - Micah 5:2-5a

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth;
and he shall be the one of peace.



Reading 2 - Luke 1: 39-55

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

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

LOVE

WEEK 4 - A PRAYER FLAG



LOVE

WEEK 4 - REFLECTION

Stepping Out in Love by Soo Laski

When I first heard this year's theme was stepping out of the boat, I was confused. I felt like I was still trying to get into the boat, it seemed like the opposite of what I was trying to achieve. However, as I spent some time reflecting on the idea of stepping out, it occurred to me that it is through the stepping out, you are stepping in.

So how and for what shall we do this stepping? My answer is Love. It sounds so simple, yet is a big ask. It is something that we must practice daily, in our thought, action, and word. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Let all that you do be done in love." 1 Corinthians 16:14.

Living a life centered in love commits us to see all people as our neighbors, all creatures as part of God's beautiful creation, and all things as gifts. With this in our hearts, minds, and souls, it is easier, or at least easier for me to speak out in the face of injustice and in other ways where our world continues to be broken.

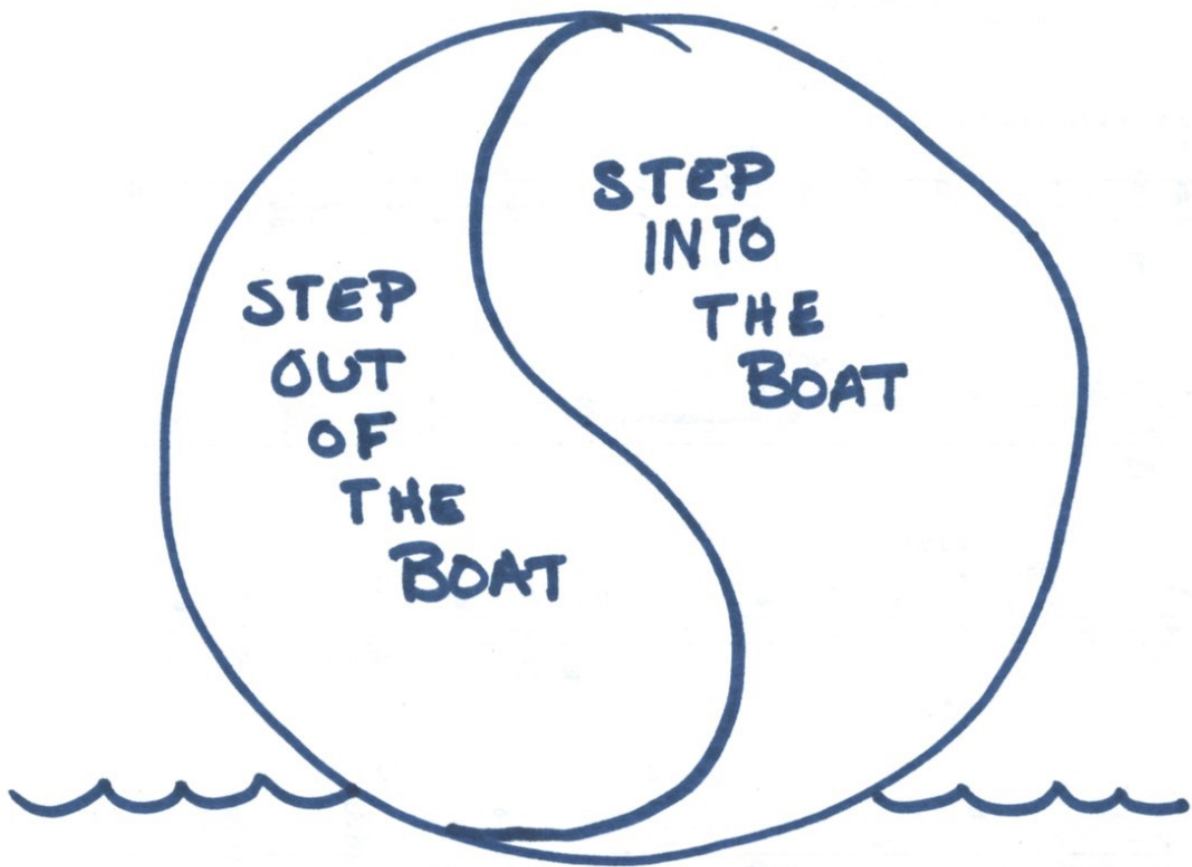
If we choose to accept Jesus' invitation to step out of the boat in love, we become co-creators, and are affirming the prayer we pray every Sunday, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven".

My vision of a world rooted in Love, is one where children could go to school without worry or fear, where all have a place to live, people could move freely across land and know they are welcome, and where children were not separated from their families.

Holy One, You who know more than we do of the brokenness in this world, and weeps when we weep, I pray that your envisioned world where all needs are met is made reality. Amen

LOVE

WEEK 4 - AN IMAGE



LOVE

by Jay O'Beirne

Burt Bacharach and Hal David wrote the classic song WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW (is love sweet love).

Since God is love the lyrics to that song take on an Advent message to me. I imagine God decided sometime before Christmas that's just what our world needed (love sweet love).

Jesus born in Bethlehem became the solution to what the world really needed.

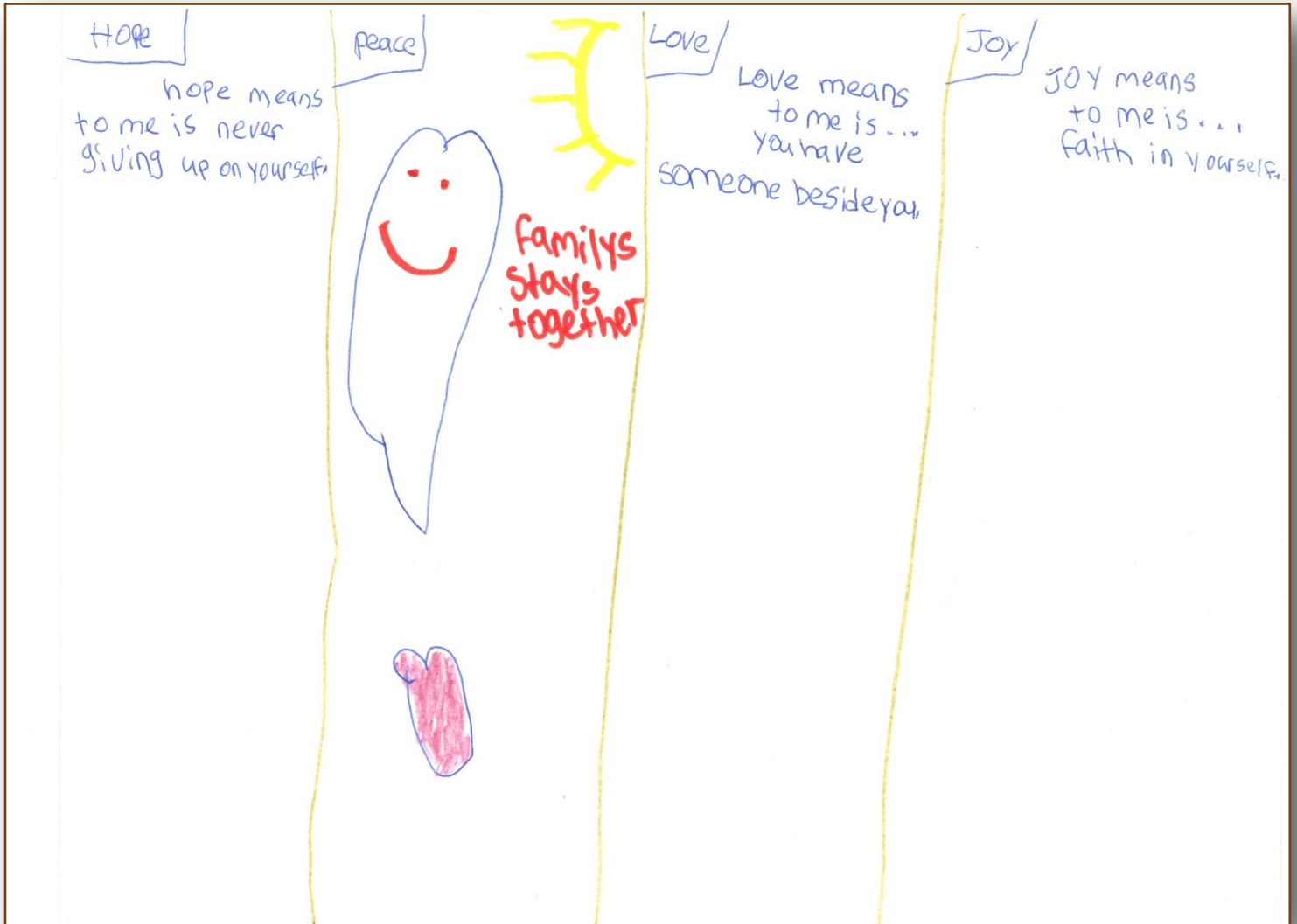
So take a moment this Advent season and listen once again to Burt Bacharach and Hal David's song WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW IS LOVE SWEET LOVE.

Like me, I believe you'll get a great Advent message whenever you substitute the word LOVE to the word GOD.



LOVE

WEEK 4—BY MADDIE BEAUMONT



LOVE

FOR ALL AGES



Our Advent Journey is almost at an end; our holy waiting is almost over. This week we light the Fourth Candle of Advent: The Candle of Love. This week we celebrate Love — God's great Love, for us and for the world, shown to us in a humble manger and in the life of Jesus. As we light the candle of Love, we can pray that the light of God's Love will shine brightly in us and through us — Lighting up our lives and the lives of those around us, as brightly as a star over a manger.



SING: The Friendly Beasts* (or your favorite Carol)

Ideas For This Week:

Jesus our brother kind and good
Was humbly born in a stable rude
And the friendly beasts
around Him stood
Jesus our brother, kind and good

I said the donkey, all shaggy and brown
I carried His mother up hill and down
I carried His mother to Bethlehem Town
I said the donkey, all shaggy and brown

I said the cow, all white and red
I gave Him my manger for His bed
I gave Him my hay to pillow His head
I said the cow, all white and red

I said the sheep, with curly horn
I gave Him my wool for a blanket warm
He wore my coat on Christmas morn
I said the sheep, with curly horn

I said the dove, from the rafters high
I cooed Him to sleep so
He would not cry
We cooed Him to sleep, my love and I
I said the dove, from the rafters high

Thus every beast, by some good spell
In the stable rude was glad to tell
Of the gift he gave, Emmanuel
The gift he gave, Emmanuel
The gift he gave, Emmanuel.

** Technically, this is a Christmas Song, not an Advent Song, so you may want to save it for Christmas! It tells of the Love and care of all God's creatures for Jesus. Not familiar with this tune? Find a version by Sufjan Stevens here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMeXfQJXM5w>*

- Light the fourth candle of Advent, the Candle of Love. Read the story of Jesus' birth in Luke 2. Sing and Pray!
- Take time to look at the lights and all your Advent preparations. Remember all you saw and did on your Advent journey, and all of those who have walked with you. Where have you seen God's Love? How can you share that Love with others tonight?
- If you are able, come celebrate Christmas Eve together with your fellow Advent pilgrims at Union Church, as we light the Christ Candle!



PRAY

Dear God:

Thank you for the lovely presents.
For the dawn sky
unravelling in pinks and purples.
For the night sky
opening to a scattering of glitter.
For winter days
wrapped in sparkling white
or draped in rich brown.

For family and friends
of all shapes, sizes and talents.
For all that we have received
through the kindness of others.

Most of all we thank you,
this special season
this almost-Christmas Day,
for the gift of your son, Jesus.
We know how much it cost you.
We know how priceless he is.

Dear God
thank you for the lovely present
that knows our past
and points to our future.
May we treasure him
with hands and with hearts
not just today, not just this season,
but every day.
Amen.

From Spillbeans.org.uk

CHRISTMAS EVE

FOR ALL AGES



Image from the Jesus Storybook Bible

A Prayer — by Brita Lynn Gill-Austern

Holy One cradle our heart this advent in a manger
a lowly, humble place where we may come to know You.
Just for this Advent help us to shift perspectives.
Help us to imagine the gift you would most like to receive.
Convince us we cannot buy it at a store and wrap it up.
Rather awaken our heart to welcome you into the center of our Advent by:
Cultivating peace within and without,
Finding joy in the simplest of things,
Bringing into our homes the lonely and broken,
Feeding the hungry, rather than our appetites for more of what we don't need,
Visiting someone who needs a warm presence,
Letting go of the resentment we have held far too long,
Opening our heart to someone to whom it was closed.
Remind us you were born in a humble place,
Waiting to be found by kings and shepherds in this vulnerable place.
Help us to look for You in holy vulnerability where you will reveal Your love.
Bless us with the gift of finding You.
Amen.

With gratitude for all those who so generously contributed to this Advent Booklet.